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An ornate, symmetrical border in gold leaf, featuring a central floral motif at the top and intricate, swirling vine-like patterns that frame the central text.

AMÉDÉE'S
SON

HARRY JAMES
SMITH



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AMÉDÉE'S SON

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BY

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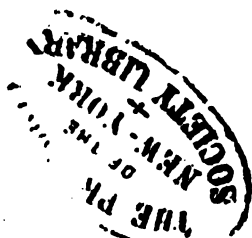
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I

As for La Rose's story, it matters little, I suppose, whether any one believes it or not. In Port l'Évêque the general opinion — perfectly safe, for that matter — was that there might be something in it. A white bird had flown through the open door into the room, she said. Well, why might that not have been some white gull or a heron, bewildered by the storm, and flying blindly at the light of poor Mathilde's candle?

Still, it did seem strange that just at that moment, if reports were to be trusted, Amédée Fougère was out there on the sea, off Sable Island, going down on the brigantine Sept Étoiles, in the most terrific gale of ten years.

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"It was a messenger, that bird," declared La Rose, with a conviction that was proof against any attack. "Mathilde, she knew it at the very instant ; and oh, how it reassured her, seeing that she, too, was so little time longer for this world."

No one who lived through that famous thirty-first of October could ever forget it. From the window of Amédée's little house at Barrassois, two miles east from Port l'Évêque, you could not even see the Point Madame Light,—a fact almost unprecedented. La Rose had been spending some weeks with Mathilde, for she was always in demand wherever there was expectation of a birth or a death in a parish, and in Amédée's home the little new one was well on the way,—“making itself waited for,” as the phrase goes. And as La Rose was the only person there besides Mathilde, the story must always rest upon her emphatic “I swear to you,” and

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"It was just as I tell it," — words much in her mouth, it must be confessed.

Said La Rose: "Poor Mathilde, she was attempting to knit a tiny small sacque of wool, very delicate and elegant; and almost between every other stitch she would look up at me and then at the window, which was shining black because she would not have the blind pulled down, and running across the little panes you saw always the rain, but not anything beyond except blackness,— and then she would sigh, oh, so strangely, to make one terrified. 'La Rose!' she would say, — just like that, soft and yet with a shrillness, — 'Oh, La Rose!' and then, 'Ah! mon Dieu, the thoughts one has!'

"And, indeed, one could not keep away the queer thoughts on a night like that. The wind was now as quiet as the grave, and now, all suddenly, it would be twenty devils, so that you heard the beams of the house wrench and

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creak, as if to tear apart. Poor Mathilde, her face was as white as a winding-sheet—all but her eyes. I remember saying to myself many times that evening, ‘Her eyes are already not of this world’; and that was true,—I am sure she was seeing other things than were in the room, for a little later she said, all suddenly, ‘Regarde donc, La Rose, you cannot see the Sept Étoiles out there?’

“‘The Sept Étoiles!’ I burst out, while a cold shiver took my back like a hand of ice. ‘O mon Jésus! What do you mean, madame? The night is like pitch; there is nothing to see.’ But she only sighed again, and answered, ‘Thank you, La Rose’; but I am ready to swear she had in her eyes a sight of the unfortunate vessel. I was certain of it at once, and knew some harm was coming; but of that I would not utter a word. So I said, gayly as I could,—which was not very gay, however,—

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“‘The thoughts like that, mon enfant, one must not permit them. For me, I am sure M’sieu Amédée will come to no harm.’

“‘Of that I am sure, too,’ she replied, in a voice quite unfamiliar and far off. ‘For he told me he would come back—and soon. It is certain he will come’; and then, after a silence except for the wind, ‘I think,’ said she, ‘Amédée will come in a little while.’

“At that I laughed out, but more from fright than pleasure, for it seemed to me my heart had stopped beating. ‘What!’ I cried, ‘come soon!—on a night like this! It is you who have such an idea, madame!’

“But she did not answer me. I got up trembling and snuffed the candle, and then I poked the fire,—for it was of a freezing cold that night,—making all the noise about it I could to reinforce my courage.

“And then, all suddenly, came a sharp noise at the window, as of somebody beating

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against it. At that I quite lost my head: never have I known such another moment, what with the wind and the dark night, and us two, the poor Mathilde and me, all alone in the house as we were. I dropped to my knees, clump! — like that — not even knowing what I did, and too dead to pray; for with the rapping at the window Mathilde had stood up, and with a voice shrill as a whistle of wind she was saying: —

“ ‘ Amédée! Amédée! He is dead!’ ”

“ Then she went to the door, without even putting her feet to the ground, as it seemed, and opened it wide.

“ With that the wind rushed in, and everything is dark, the candle being blown out — pouf! — all in an instant. So while I still crouch there, in a heap, I hear a great flapping, and a creature like a white bird, only larger, had made its way into the room and was beating its wings on the floor — now

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here, now yonder, under the table, on the bed, — everywhere. Later I found the crucifix fallen off the chimneypiece, which is a certain proof that the thing happened as I have told it, and a little tin picture of Amédée which Mathilde had kept standing on the table was lying face down, quite near it. But at that moment I am telling you of, it seemed there was nothing but a flapping everywhere in the dark ; and then, once more quiet; and I lift my head, and there is Mathilde standing in the door, against a little gleam of light from outside, with her hands to each side holding the doorposts.

“ ‘It’s gone,’ she said, as quiet as I’m talking to you. ‘It’s gone,’ she said. ‘It was a messenger.’

“ As for me, I got my forces back somehow, stood on my feet, though still shaking a little, and put my arms about her, and led her back, all gently, to the bed; and then I

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shut and bolted the door, and lit the candle and pulled down the blind—Mathilde did not object any more. But the rest of that night, I tell you, I had plenty to do to keep me from giving in to fright again. And about five o'clock in the morning—All Saints' Day, it was—Mathilde died; but she was happy and content, poor thing, and I'm sure it was small loss to her pure sweet soul to take that journey without being administered first, for if ever angel existed on this earth, it was that Mathilde Fougère.

“And whatever her man may have been,—yes, I know the things they tell about him,—it is certain she loved him better than her eyes and nose. Never in my life have I seen more love than between those two; and if he did wrong, now and again, being much like other men, and most of the time away from home beside,—well, for my part, I think she knew what it all meant, and he

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knew that was so, and it was a good match. And isn't that to be seen in Michel: he is like his mother in understanding things, with his eyes so deep and grave. Few children are like that, and for the most part those who are have something strange behind them." . . .

So La Rose would recount her famous experience, filling it out with an abundance of circumstantial detail, giving it dramatic emphasis with a multiplicity of little, short, jerky gestures, like the movements of a sandpiper on the wave-edge of the beach. She was much like one of those alert, business-like little birds in other respects as well: in the knowing, not too trustful way she had of looking at you, her head a little cocked to one side; in the sharpness of her observation, and in a certain trimness of carriage that almost made you forget the sixty or more years of which her brown, wrinkled face, sparse hair drawn back into a tiny knot, and thin lips pressed together

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shrewdly over almost toothless gums, were sufficient evidence.

La Rose must always have been just like that, you felt, whatever the actual count of her years—and for that matter, she could not have told you herself what it was. Sometimes she would answer seventy-five, —even eighty-five,—at other times it would be as low as fifty-nine, and her birthday to-morrow. The only certainty was that once she had made her appearance in the world — over there on the Cape; people had begun calling her La Rose, perhaps half in irony; she had lived now here, now there, always in the vicinity of Port l'Évêque; and always, she liked to declare, she had remained, and would remain, “bonne Acadienne.” That was all her history.

“But, La Rose,” one might persist, “are you sure it was a bird?”

“It was exactly as I told you,” she would retort, a little piqued. “Bird or not, I cannot

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say; but this I know, it was *like* a bird,— only not like any bird I ever saw. It was white, with long wings. I did not see if it had a head. And it seemed never to be still, but always in motion, fluttering, on the ground or in the air, and it made no sound, except with its wings, which beat always.”

“Well, what is your opinion of it, La Rose?”

The small, knowing eyes would half shut, and after a pause La Rose would sigh and shake her head.

“I have no opinion, me; I only know what I believe. Why should not Mathilde be right, then? Such things do happen, as every one knows; and it was just at that hour, as Gaston Leblanc assured me a thousand times, that the Sept Étoiles went to pieces. It is clear he could not come himself, poor Amédée; so why should not le bon Dieu have sent a messenger? And then, once the message was given, out it went

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again,—who knows where? Mathilde understood, the dear child, and that was all that needed. She died happy, and went straight among the angels.”

La Rose would dab her crumpled handkerchief at the corners of her eyes. “Besides,” she concluded, returning to her favorite evidence, “did you ever see another child like Michel? From his first day he’s been that way,—different from the others. Often he has that look in his eyes of being elsewhere, just as I remember that night in his mother’s; and the droll tastes he has! and his gravity, which is not like the most part of children, and his way of saying things! But, however that may be, every one is compelled to be fond of him; and if it were not for his atheist of a grandfather who is bringing him up without piety or common sense, I should expect a future for him. Poor little lamb—Heaven knows what is ahead.” . . .

II

UNTIL Michel was four years old or so, La Rose had lived at Captain Fougère's. The captain deplored her superstitiousness and her addiction to gossip; but he knew as well as any one the fame she had as a pilot of childhood through its first perilous channels, and he intended that Michel should not want for good care. Céleste — wooden-featured, stupid Céleste La Vache — was satisfactory, in her way, as a domestic; she would work her two hands to shreds, she declared, for Captain Trajane; but it would not do to intrust her with the added responsibility of a baby.

In this strange whim of the captain's there was plenty of matter for speculation. First, what possible reason could there be for his wanting the poor little creature at all — he, an old broken-down sea-dog, wifeless since

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six years ago, and so bitter against Amédée that he would not even, it was said, have his name spoken in the house. Mathilde's relatives, who had taken everything else there was to take without any protest on his part, would have taken the child, too, as a matter of course; but the captain had roared, and threatened, and bribed, and had finished by obtaining his wish.

Through Port l'Évêque many wise heads were shaken. "How an old man of sixty — and a freethinker, for that matter — can expect to bring up a boy, it is beyond my understanding!" Thus Madame Beauséjour, the sacristan's wife; — "and after one failure, too!" she added significantly.

"His habits are so frightfully regular," supplied Madame Paon, who kept the little fruit and candy shop near the post-office. "Céleste has told me it is being like one of the hands of a clock to live there. That is the way

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everything goes from morning till night. God knows you cannot have it so when there is a baby."

Madame Beauséjour expressed her agreement. There was a baby in her home now. One must do as one could when there was a baby.

"For my part I think he will soon have enough of it," said Madame Paon.

"I shudder to think of what that child will be taught," observed Madame Beauséjour. "The only comfort is that he has taken La Rose. There is not her like in the four parishes; and beside that, she will find a way to give the little creature some religious attentions when the old man is not looking."

Naturally it was impossible for any one to understand just how welcome this new responsibility really was to Captain Trajane. He had fretted under his enforced inaction, like some old dismantled ship that still tugs and

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strains at the moorings whenever the wind sets seaward ; but more intolerable even than that to his proud spirit had been the ever-present recollection of a failure, of the miscarriage of his hopes, the fatuity — to all appearance — of the convictions he had most ardently championed (“that is what comes of those wild ideas of his,” he had heard them say); and he clutched with feverish eagerness at this opportunity of vindicating himself, both in his own eyes and in the eyes of the world. They should see — they should be made to see — some day.

It was easy enough, he had often told himself bitterly, to explain what had happened in that other case. For most of those years — just when oversight was most needed — he had himself been away at sea. The thing had been muddled from the very start. But this time it would be different. He was at home now ; he had plenty of leisure for devoting

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himself to the great task he had undertaken; and there were the various lessons of the past to profit by. Captain Trajane rejoiced that, after all these years of defeat,—a wasted existence, he told himself, refusing to set any store by his honors of the sea,—something had come into his life that made it again genuinely worth living, right through to the end, however far distant.

Céleste was greatly impressed by the change that had come to pass in him. “But how he is grown young!” she declared. “I ask myself if it is the same Captain Trajane who used to be so melancholy. ‘His garden and his books,’ I would say, ‘that is all that keeps him out of the grave’; but now! it is almost as in the old days before that Amédée broke his heart. You should only watch him working at his garden—you would say a young man of twenty!”

Say what you would of Captain Fougère's

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ideas, you could not deny the magnificence of that garden of his. In the four parishes it was not to be surpassed, either for neatness and originality or for luxuriance. As a matter of habit, every passer-by paused for a moment to look in at the gate; and the story went that an American traveling-man had declared that nothing like it existed in Boston or New York. Oh, yes, that was a garden for you!

A hedge of arbor-vitæ shut it off from the street, and just inside the hedge, all about, ran a smooth gravel walk, perfectly rounded, and lined with small periwinkles. In one corner was an elaborate rustic settle, much too uncomfortable, of course, to be sat upon; and in the other stood a miniature pagoda, which the captain had brought back many years ago from Siam. In a star-shaped flower-bed, exactly in the middle of the inclosure, flourished the largest white rosebush in Port l'Évêque; and this was supported by a little fence,

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ingeniously constructed out of the ribs of a whale that not many winters since had drifted into the harbor in a gale and been killed. At four points in the lawn, equidistant from the rosebush, garden boxes, made out of hollowed vertebræ from the same creature, ran over all summer with a riot of nasturtiums; and in a long, narrow bed, close to the house, grew a profusion of candytuft, mignonette, asters, and morning-glories.

Such was Captain Fougère's garden, and at almost any hour of the day you were likely to see him there, dressing the paths, or devising a new drain, or putting an additional coat of whitewash to the already glistening picket fence outside the hedge. And sometimes — as Michel grew out of babyhood — you would see the two of them sitting together on the low bench by the steps, while the old man painstakingly acquainted his grandson with the mysteries of the alphabet.

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The captain had a plan of education ready, and he was never weary of perfecting its details. At an early age — the earliest possible, it may be said, for his grandfather had made successive attempts from the time Michel was two and a half on — the boy learned to read English, Trajane's preferred language, and a little later, French ; and his ears were filled with instructive accounts of distant countries, and of noble deeds by land and sea. Also some of the wonders of the universe were carefully pointed out to him : the names of certain stars ; how the moon waxes and wanes, and the explanation of it, illustrated by the use of a candle, an apple, a knitting-needle, and an orange ; also the periods of the tides, and the use of the mariner's compass — which, by the age of eight, he was able to box as fluently as another child might have gone through his catechism.

Thus, solemnly enough : “ Nor', nor' by

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east, nor' nor' east, nor' east by nor', nor' east ;
nor' east by east, east nor' east, east by nor'."

"Excellent, my boy, excellent," the captain would pronounce. "And now can you tell me how far the sun is from the earth?"

"Ninety-two million, five hundred thousand miles, sir."

"And the moon?"

"Two hundred and forty thousand miles."

"Very good. And do you recall any lesson that we might learn from these facts?"

"Yes, sir. That we should distrust appearances, for to the naked eye the sun appears as near as the moon."

"Who made the sun and the moon?"

"The Supreme Being, sir."

"What does He demand of us?"

"That we live in accordance with his laws and avoid all superstition."

"What means have we for finding out his laws?"

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“Science, sir.”

Science — that was Captain Trajane’s word of magic, the universal solvent, the panacea for human ills, the religion of Nature. In Science was the whole revelation of the Supreme Being and of his laws. Infinitely benevolent, infinitely just and wise, infinitely superior to the man-made God whom ignorance worshiped with candle and bell, Trajane’s Deity waited only until enlightenment should turn men away from their superstitions: then they would find Him. The captain had read rather widely in the old French deists, and he knew almost by heart several modern “scientific” pamphleteers. If his own thinking was not very deep nor very logical, it was at least sincere and fervent.

There had been a time when he had been bitter against religion — trickery! priestcraft! fairy stories! — and like many a greater champion of the Truth — whatever the term may

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stand for — he had been maligned, even persecuted. A certain blunt imperiousness of manner — a proud soul at bay — was perhaps the fruit of this. But whatever that manner might once have indicated, it belied the Trajane of to-day. Of late years, possibly resulting from the disappointments and sorrows he had been through, a certain intellectual tolerance had come to him that his masters had not imparted.

“Illumination,” he had discovered, must not be looked for at once among the majority: the process was slow, almost imperceptible. What was required, above all, was loyalty to what one had. If your neighbors were still bound in superstition, that was due to defective education; and even in superstition there was a certain measure of truth — wheat and thorns together, as everywhere in life. And if they found any happiness in superstition, they were not to be unsparingly condemned,

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since happiness was the end for which the Supreme Being had created humankind.

So liberal in these matters had he become of late years, that, to the surprise of every one, he made no objection to Michel's accompanying La Rose to church as often as he cared to go — only, he said, the child should never be forced. So long as he followed his instinctive impulses, which were naturally good (had not Rousseau proved that conclusively in his "Émile" ?), no harm would come to him.

III

THUS it happened that almost every fine Sunday La Rose, if she was staying anywhere in the neighborhood, would call in for Michel and take him to mass with her. The white church stood a little way up the hill at the other end of Port l'Évêque, almost two miles distant. Every step of the journey was a delight to the boy.

The street, which kept close to the narrow harbor, curled ahead of them like a silver ribbon. On each side, with occasional wide intervals, were grouped the small houses, trig and bright as the houses of a toy village; the windows always filled with flowering plants, mostly geraniums; the intervening fences dazzling in whitewash; beyond, on one side, the blue, crisp, dancing harbor, with two or three schooners at anchor, and a little fleet of brown-

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sailed boats from the Cape, like a flock of curlew, making for the beach under the church ; on the other side, the low, steep, vividly green hill, bare of trees, rising to a sharp skyline, where sometimes a solitary cow or three or four sheep stood in striking eminence.

Wagons from the country went rattling by, packed with whole families in Sunday attire. La Rose knew them all.

"There go the Bergères from Petite Anse," she would say. "Always a new baby there every year"; or, "It is those Pig Cove Marteauss—the old grandmother will not be going to church another summer."

Before and behind them, the whole length of the street, it was a continual, various stream of pedestrians, with no reverse currents, that set towards the church ; there were old fishermen, scarred and weather-beaten, walking painfully with a hitch in one leg or a shuffling foot, their home-made clothes, far too

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ample now, hanging shapelessly about their shrunken limbs; there were old women in faded black — such numbers of them — dressed exactly like La Rose, with thin, wrinkled, animated faces, and chattering rather shrilly in small groups; young men, brown-skinned and broad-shouldered, awkward and self-conscious in Sunday clothes; and flocks of girls, mostly in white, if the weather was warm enough, with gayly ribboned hats, laughing and giggling behind the shelter of handkerchief or missal: — the street from end to end was alive with color and movement and pleasant human sounds; and over everything the splendid morning sun, riding high in the south, shed its warmth and brightness.

In Michel's later memory Sunday seemed always possessed of a special radiance, above any other day; all the most engaging qualities of the community life seemed to be summed up in this gay, pathetic, animated dominical

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pageant, making steadily toward the church under the quavering summons of Gabrielle, the famous, almost canonized bell of the parish.

Michel felt a joyful thrill in the consciousness of being one member of all that throng—a little vital part of the whole, moving in a sort of secret rhythm with twelve hundred others of his kind, young and old. He walked very erect and observant at La Rose's side, not at all eager to join the flocks of children that went half-scampering past them, yet not in the least solemn of mood. A certain inexpressible exultation filled his heart, which did not ask for outlet in noise and merriment.

La Rose chattered now and then, in a pleasant, companionable way; but for the most part they made their journey in silence, keeping a spry but respectable gait, La Rose always with her little movements and alert carriage of a sandpiper edging the waves, and Michel trot-

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ting beside her, often holding a brown hand, and taking account of all the genial activities of the pious morning out of his dark eyes, which had already, in a marked degree, something of the gravity and look of seeing beyond to which La Rose ascribed so much significance.

He found much to enjoy, too, in the long service at the church, in spite of the defects La Rose grieved over in his piety. He loved to watch the priests in their rich vestments, passing and repassing the gaudy altar, mounting the three steps, genuflecting, signing the cross; he always snuffed eagerly for the first pungent whiff of incense, as it came floating down in a blue cloud over the kneeling multitude; and the solemn music, badly rendered though it was by a wheezy organ and an unambitious mixed choir, always gave him some agreeable tingles and prickings along his face and back. But that he was participating in

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an august mystery did not apparently occur to him.

“Not that one need expect much at his age,” said La Rose to herself. “Yet many children have been holy martyrs. It is that atheist of a grandfather who brings such things about.”

Long before the “missa est” had been pronounced, Michel was wondering whether he would ever want to come again to a place where you must sit still such a long time through a sermon, and then kneel on a hard board until the skin was certainly worn off your legs. Out of doors it was so lovely and bright; sometimes he could see a bird flash by through the clear blue. He waited in agony for the service to be over, and at the earliest possible moment tugged La Rose away from the pew, where she would have liked to stay a little longer at her prayers, and out among the throng of gossiping, hand-shaking Acadians,

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slowly dispersing on the broad sloping *place* in front of the edifice.

Here La Rose would find Madame Beauséjour, the sacristan's wife, to whose house they usually went for dinner. Michel liked this, despite all the pious counsels that he was sure of receiving; for Madame Beauséjour's Eugénie and he were almost of the same age, and excellent playmates. After dinner, for an hour or two, they would be allowed to amuse themselves as they chose, playing quietly in the old cemetery at the top of the hill, hunting for wild strawberries, or perhaps, if Eugénie's father were in a good humor, enjoying the unspeakable privilege of a climb up into the belfry, where, in the green light, Gabrielle hung in reverend solitude.

IV

How often it happens that by a seeming caprice of our memory, which works after its own laws so deep below the levels of consciousness, this or that evanescent — perhaps trivial — moment of experience is seized upon, embalmed, laid away in some obscure cavern of the mind, to be at a later day suddenly called back into life, still as fresh in this new morning of vision as in its first reality — tinged even by some thrilling rainbow lustre which the outward eye rarely perceives ! By what strange fatality has it come to pass that, of a hundred occasions on which we have greeted a friend with familiar words amid familiar surroundings, one alone should have been chosen out, imprinted indelibly upon our mental retina ; that with each later thought of the friend should recur

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the vision of the room on that day, some odd, insignificant detail of dress, the particular quality of the voice, and the falling of the light in a certain way — would that we might see it again ! — across the loved face ? It were vain to inquire.

One of these moments, destined to a frequent reawakening in Michel's memory, belonged to a certain Sunday afternoon spent with Eugénie in the old *cimetière* on the hill. He could not have been more than ten at the time, for he recalled the smart little sailor hat he wore (it was new), with a brass button on each side and the gilt legend "H. M. S. Pinafore" across the front.

It must have been midsummer, too, for the daisies and August flowers and buttercups were in blossom, and along the Cape Breton shore summer is hardly in the air till July. It is then that the roses bloom, down there, in sheltered gardens, and the wild strawber-

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ries ripen on the barrens; and in the marshes, like just-alighted butterflies, poise a million pink-winged flowers of the calopogon.

Dinner was over at Madame Beauséjour's, and the children were free. Both of them liked the old cemetery for a playground, — a liking in which there was not the least taint of unwholesomeness, since the plot of land had been out of use for some years. The wooden crosses (there were no other monuments) leaned this way and that; the mounds were overgrown, sometimes almost obliterated; and everywhere, across the old paths, within and without the untended inclosures, crowding up to the very pedestal of the tall iron cross at the head of the slope, flashed the tremulous, nodding ranks of summer flowers. Michel remembered how they had waded there, knee-deep, in the gleaming flood.

“Tiens, donc!” cried Eugénie, clapping her hands in delight. “It is all gold and silver!”

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The afternoon sun shot slantingly across the countless white and yellow heads and turned them into floating motes of light ; wherever you looked it was the same, — a waving lake of color, perpetually rippled, shaken, tossed into momentary spray, eddied or wind-streaked by the restless summer breeze. In a spot like this, death had no unlovely quality : it was beautiful to think of sleeping under such a tempest of quivering life ; nor could those happy souls, whose passing was here commemorated, be much grieved if mortal hands came but rarely to tend their resting-places, since a force so much more motherly, so kindly and pious, had flung this broadcast glory above them.

Michel was not without a certain pleasant awe of these memorials of death. He liked to stand before the white cross beneath which his mother was sleeping, and to spell out the

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inscription ; — already the winter storms had begun their work of effacement upon it: —

ICI GÎT LE CORPS DE
Mathilde Marie Fougère
FEMME D'AMÉDÉE FOUGÈRE
TRÉPASSÉE LE 31 OCTOBRE, 1882
AGÉE DE 22 ANS
Requiescat in Pace

“It is here the poor maman,” he said, looking gravely at Eugénie. “That was when I was born. I never even saw her.”

“La Rose says she was beautiful as a white lily,” commented the little girl softly. “I am sure it was sad to be dead like that when there was a little one to take care of.”

Michel sighed. “One never knows too well,” he said. “Perhaps my father needed her as much as myself, for there was La Rose who would stay behind, and grandfather — they could be trusted, you see.”

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They wandered on among the crosses, kneeling down now and then in the grass to pick a strawberry, which they would eat with a silent, sacrilegious thrill, aware that it had grown on holy ground.

Eugénie paused before a small cross from which the paint had been all but worn away. "Look," she said. "It must be for some very little child."

The cross had fallen over until its top was on a level with the daisy flood. The two children knelt down beside it and tried to decipher the inscription; but not a letter remained.

"It's sad, isn't it?" said Eugénie, heaving a small, pensive sigh. "No one can ever tell its name now — just as if it never had one. Perhaps its father and mother have gone away from here, — or died, — and nobody remembers it was once alive."

She patted the little thing gently, with a

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soft, crooning murmur, as if to comfort it for its neglect. At that moment she seemed utterly oblivious of Michel, and he stood in silence, looking at her, not venturing any comment; and it was this picture of her, kneeling there in the deep grass over the little grave cross without a name, that was destined, through some accident of memory, — if one may use the term, — to recur to him most vividly whenever, in later years, his thoughts turned backward to these days of childhood. Her brown hair, almost golden in the sunlight, was loose over her shoulders, after the invariable fashion of Port l'Évêque; and on her head she wore a drooping white straw hat, decorated with pink roses. Michel felt very proud to be the companion and protector of so adorable a creature.

“We might put it up straighter, the little cross,” he suggested finally.

They went down to the road and brought

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back some stones, with which they laboriously propped the neglected token.

"I wonder if it will be glad, up there," said Eugénie wistfully, as she surveyed their finished work. "We did as well as we could, anyway. Do you suppose it could be looking at us?"

Michel was sober. "Perhaps," he said doubtfully. "Mon grandpère, he says you can't tell much about those things. I asked him once if he did n't think people could turn into birds when they are dead. He said, 'Why not, as well as anything else?' and I said I was going to believe it, because I think it would be nice; and anyway, La Rose, she says birds are messengers sometimes."

Eugénie turned wondering brown eyes upon him. "Sister Sainte Josèphe, she never said that, and she knows everything in religion."

"I am not sure that birds being messen-

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gers is religion," commented Michel. "Only it is certain, La Rose says, that something like a bird came to my mother the night I was born. La Rose would have both hands cut off, she says, and her tongue pulled out by the roots before she would deny it."

"My mother, she tells me to believe what they teach me at the convent," said Eugénie, with a proper toss of her head. "She says it is important to believe some things and not others."

"My grandfather knows more than anybody else in Port l'Évêque," asserted Michel stoutly.

Eugénie had her retort. "Did you ask him about the messengers?" she inquired brazenly.

The boy flushed under his dark skin. "There are some things even my grandfather does not know, perhaps," he maintained. "One need not be running to him with everything."

An impulse of religious zeal took hold of

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Eugénie. "He does not go to church, your grandfather. That is wicked, not to go to church."

A frown of anger narrowed the boy's brows. He glared at Eugénie for an instant with a catch in his breath and tightened fists; then when he saw the look of fear come into her eyes, he recollected himself. Eugénie put one hand gently on his arm.

"I am sorry I said that," she murmured.

Michel said, slowly and deliberately, "My grandfather is the best man in Port l'Évêque, and knows more than any man in the province."

There was a lull in the conversation after that, for Eugénie, though she could not conscientiously agree with so sweeping an assertion, did not feel that it would be wise to dispute it.

"Look!" she cried. "There is my father." She pointed to the road below, where a bent

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figure was making its way with the ambling, wheel-like gait of a daddy-long-legs toward the church. "He is going to sound for the vespers. Perhaps he would let us go up and see Gabrielle. I have not made a fault all day."

V

AT Port l'Évêque and for miles around every one could tell you all about Gabrielle; the great age of her, and why she was called by that name; from what foreign convent she had come, and how, because of the casting away of the vessel on the Cape, near Petite Anse, the Bishop of Arichat had allowed her to be installed at Port l'Évêque instead of going on to Montreal.

Much more than this. In the old days there had been a clock in the tower, and Gabrielle struck all the hours with a clear, silvery voice that could be heard, on still nights, as far as St. Esprit. Ah, but that was gone by long since. To-day there was a quaver in it, as of weakness. After each stroke you heard an odd, rasping over-note, that seemed to cut short the ring, and to make almost a discord of it. But this was Gabrielle's glory.

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It appears that the belfry had taken fire from a decoration of lanterns in honor of the return of the fleet from the Grand Banks. It was late at night already, — almost ten o'clock. The street was full of gayety and hubbub. Hardly had the fire been discovered, when the belfry, which was old and had been leaning a little for a long time, was a very pinnacle of flame. The whole edifice seemed to be doomed.

And it was just in the midst of this excitement and despair that Gabrielle had pealed out, as if to give courage to the workers. Something must have happened already to the clock, for she did not stop at ten strokes, but rang on and on, nobody knows how many times, until at last, quite suddenly, the whole belfry tipped forward, and slipped with a crash into the street. After which, it was an easy matter to extinguish the fire.

Gabrielle had been crippled, but not destroyed. They built a new belfry for her, and

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she was restored to her old eminence and duty, except that there was no longer any clock with which to connect her. And for thirty-five years since then she had hung there, serving Port l'Évêque and God with joy. She was, so to speak, the angel guardian of the town. Every one loved her; recounted her marvelous story; rejoiced under her pious oversight. To be her protector was Zacharie's greatest distinction.

Certainly she could not have been more jealously protected. Zacharie was little less than a jailer. It was only with the greatest difficulty—after argument, flattery, and prayer had all been exhausted—that any curious inhabitant of the town could gain access to her. Her solitude was inviolate, like that of a cloistered nun, who serves God, year by year, in a place where no vulgar step may intrude.

Zacharie Beauséjour was held in a certain

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awe throughout Port l'Évêque. From his father before him he had inherited his calling. There clung about him an odor, not altogether imaginary, either, of the sanctuary's musty corners, its cobwebby organ-loft, and its high-backed, loose-hinged, humpy-cushioned pews. The most human and engaging trait of his nature was his affection for Eugénie. He seemed to be perpetually marveling at the fact that this blooming wisp of girlhood should be of his own flesh and blood. Eugénie knew her power, and was ready to use it with discretion. A little wheedling—a promise to be good, and not to ask too many questions—and she would often gain from Zacharie the privilege, sought in vain by others, of a visit to the belfry. Not that the children were allowed to go up there alone. Zacharie would carefully lock the creaking tower-door behind him, and follow his more agile companions up the worn stairs, with his long, loose-

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jointed movements, all extremities and head, — ejaculating various wheezy cautions by the way: as that they were not to touch the bell-rope; that they were not to open the trap until he got there; that on no account whatever were they to get cobwebs on their clothes.

After the raising of the trap door, the climb increased greatly in fascination and mystery. The dim tower-loft into which this gave access received its only light from a small aperture (infinitely far above, it seemed to Michel) in the belfry floor. Palpable gloom filled all the recesses, seemed ready to fling out black arms at you, like the cross-beams that leaped mid-air through the upper spaces. About the sides clung the ladder-like stairs, turning by sharp flights and square platforms, round and round, higher and higher, until finally, in a sort of aerial ecstasy, out under the belfry top you came, inconceivably aloft, right by the side of

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old Gabrielle. The light up there was tempered green, for the belfry was shuttered; and there was a continual rustling, like wings, where the breeze played through the openings.

One thrill, dizziest of all, was yet in store; only you must wait for Zacharie to come up with you, and his asthma made him climb slow. But at last, at the pushing back of a button, a small door flung outward over a narrow platform; and there you were, blinking like a bat in the horizontal yellow sun, looking down in unbelieving wonder upon the tiny, unfamiliar houses below, staring in the excitement of a new discovery at the great stretch of land that lay revealed beyond the low harbor slopes opposite, — out and out to a distant shore you had never visited, — and beyond that, the golden sheet of the ocean.

“There is,” pronounced Zacharie, “no view so extensive from any church tower in

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the Maritime Provinces,—very likely in all America”; and the children never failed to be impressed by this decisive testimony to the charms of their native town.

“The largest ship in the world,” said Zacharie, “could ride at ease in this harbor. It is better than the harbor of New York,—safer for vessels,—though not so large, of course. But for that matter, why should we need a large harbor? Port l’Évêque is not by any means so large a city as New York.”

“Grandfather says I shall perhaps go to New York some day,—or to Boston,” announced Michel. “It is to study the science there.”

Zacharie hurled himself with characteristic inveteracy at the new subject. “That is an absurd idea,” he snapped. “You will never amount to much. You will be as bad as your father. You are not being well brought up. You should be made to go to church more

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regularly; that's what you need. You should learn your catechism. Why don't you take an example from my Eugénie, who is several weeks younger than you, yet has already achieved a medal in her class at the convent? She is a model both of industry and piety."

Eugénie's face flushed to the roots of her hair. She wished he had not referred to that just now. She saw Michel's eyes fasten themselves hotly upon her bosom, where the small silver badge

POUR EXCELLENCE SUPÉRIEURE

was prominently — all too prominently — displayed. (Till that moment she had been proud enough of it! It had been publicly presented to her by the tutorial sister, Sainte Josèphe, and was a token of great industry and intellectual endowment. Were there not thirty little girls, some of them older than she, in the same grade at the convent school, and was

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not Eugénie one out of a scant two dozen so honored ?)

Michel saw the look in her face, and remembered the incident of the hour before. Suddenly forgetting the impetuous word on his tongue, he stammered a meek "Oui, m'sieur."

"People who are irregular at church," said Zacharie sharply, "are liable to be irregular in other respects as well. Irregularity leads to indolence, and indolence leads to vice."

Eugénie bravely interposed. "But father, the captain Trajane, he is a very good man, even if he does not go to church." She took hold coaxingly of his watch chain.

Zacharie turned an angry look at her; then his face softened. "At all events," he said, with rather querulous resignation, "his ideas are outlandish. A good sermon or two would help to set them right, you may count upon it. He is bothering himself about things that were settled long ago."

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They reëntered the belfry, and the children began examining Gabrielle reverently. She hung from the cross-beam of a tall wooden scaffolding. She was very beautiful to look at, patched with verdigris, and bearing an embossed coat of arms a foot or more above the Latin inscription that ran in a wide band about her lower margin.

"Do not touch with the hand," Zacharie cautioned them. "She is very delicate."

"Tiens," exclaimed Eugénie; "this is where she fell. There is a crack."

"Not a large crack," said Zacharie, jealously; "scarcely visible unless you look closely. In almost every respect the bell is still as good as new — good for another hundred years, you may depend. That is, if she is looked out for. Though she is delicate as a child. She needs every attention."

Michel always wondered in what ways Gabrielle's delicacy was evinced, and what

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special attentions she required. But that was Zacharie's business ; and he had his ideas about what should and what should not be revealed. He was no babbler. It was not until he was walking home again beside La Rose that the boy felt free to ask the questions that thronged his mind. La Rose always seemed to understand what he meant, and never, by the least hint of voice or manner, implied that he was not talking common sense.

“La Rose, do you think Gabrielle really and truly suffered in the fire?”

“And why not, mon petit?” replied La Rose, with utter assurance. “Why not, then? If you could have heard the ringing she gave that night! It was of a soul in agony, but triumphant — *cette belle voix de martyre*. And at that very second the wind began to change. *Figure-toi, donc!* From west to east in no longer than two minutes, or a minute and a half!”

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“And then she fell?” urged the boy, who never tired of the story.

“Oui, précisément, just as the wind shifted, —and still ringing with her sweet voice of a martyr—ding, ding, ding, like that—loud, but oh, so heart-breaking. We were all crying there below, we girls, in the street; and suddenly pouf! br-r-r!—the belfry began to tip right over our heads. My God, if we ran then! Like white rats! And the next second, first slowly, and then with a crash like the end of the world, down comes the belfry, right in front of the tower. But if I will ever forget that sight!”

“And Gabrielle?”

“We saw nothing of her that night. We supposed we should never see her again in this world. It was as if one's godmother were suddenly to be thrown from the top of a mast and destroyed—you would not be expecting to hear her speak again!”

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Michel mused with an agreeable shudder over the simile, before urging La Rose on once more.

“Well, so then the next morning came,” she resumed, “and we all went up there to the church, sad as to a funeral; and there was the poor saint lying on her side, black as a cinder. But already they were lifting her up with crowbars; and later came a pulley and other things; and then they said to us girls, ‘Scrape away the soot!’ so we scraped all that morning; and all the afternoon we polished, as if performing an act of religion; and at night—ah! what do you think?—they rang her again! The joy there was on every face then, though it was clear it would never be the same voice as of old.”

“In some ways,” said Michel meditatively, “I think I like her voice even better like that.”

La Rose agreed. “That is true,” she said.

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"It is like people. We love those who have never suffered, because they are so gay and beautiful; but we love best those who have suffered, because they are more comforting. When I hear Gabrielle's poor thin voice calling to church, courageous still after all she has known of grief and fright, I feel as if some blessed saint of Heaven were making the invitation. She understands all our troubles, that dear Gabrielle."

"She is well looked out for," observed Michel. "Zacharie, he almost makes me frightened sometimes."

"There, that's just it; he frightens me to death," she agreed. "He is so set in his ideas, as if bolted down with iron. You must believe this, he says; you must believe that; and there's nothing besides, he says. He does not know anything that is not in the catechism, the old daddy-long-legs. I do not see how his poor wife can live with him; but I think

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it is because she is rather fat. Fat people can always make the best of things. But here is my idea : the trouble with old Zacharie is, he has always lived right there so close to the church. He has never seen any more of the world than that ! That is what has made him superstitious. Pst ! He does not know what life is."

La Rose shrugged her shoulders with the contempt of one who had explored every nook and cranny of the universe.

VI

FINALLY, climbing the hill beyond the inner harbor, the two pilgrims reached the end of their journey. La Rose would usually remain at Captain Trajane's for tea; but whatever time intervened she spent in company with Céleste in the kitchen. Michel joined his grandfather. There was no rule to this effect, — merely an implicit understanding, which the boy would not think of slighting under any circumstances.

He was infinitely proud of his grandfather; but he was also afraid of him, and this not because he had ever received any harsh treatment; only there was something about him that exercised an odd restraint upon the boy's spirit. He always felt himself cutting a dull figure, tongue-tied and slow-witted; he never knew how to answer the captain's questions; and when, as occasionally happened, he be-

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came conscious of the tax he was putting upon his indulgence, he would be thrown into a kind of mental panic that quite precluded any sensible response. Michel was ashamed of himself; he did not know how to account for his own failure; but try as he would, he could not attain the frankness and intimacy of relation which the captain so passionately desired between them, and which, for that matter, the boy desired himself, with all the sincerity of his nature.

It was understood that, at one time or another, every Sunday, the two would engage in some serious and improving conversation. Returning in the late afternoon with La Rose, Michel was likely to find the old man seated on the long bench by the steps, pipe in mouth, contemplating his garden. Sometimes it happened that he would have a volume of his favorite author, Plutarch, lying open beside him; and then the hour passed quickly, for

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Michel would take the small, hide-bound book, whose yellow pages and old-fashioned type always attracted him, and read aloud from one of the Lives, spelling out the long words, which were numerous, and listening eagerly to the captain's explanations and comments.

But more often no such easy fortune awaited him. He would take his place gravely on the bench, almost certain of the first question that would come, and hunting desperately through his flying brain for some worthy answer. That is what happened on the day of the incident in the old burying-ground.

"Well, my boy," Captain Trajane began, speaking in English (La Rose hardly understood it), "what have you found profitable in your day's experiences?"

Michel clutched helplessly at the usual trite response, and felt ashamed of himself as he did so. "The sermon was excellent, grandfather."

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"I am glad of that. And what was it about?"

Michel stared helplessly at the rosebush, then at the pagoda, then at his dusty shoes. From the kitchen he heard the vivacious chatter of La Rose. Was it an hour since he had left her?

"I do not exactly remember, grandfather. I dare say — that is, I am almost sure it was about being virtuous." (This was another well-worn way out of a dilemma. Michel knew that at least it would save further questions along the line of the sermon.)

"If it treated of virtue, my boy, I trust that you will put its lessons to heart. The ancients had a respect for virtue which the world has all but lost to-day. Sentiment, superstition, are put in the place of it now. Virtue is a plain, simple, honest thing; that is why it has gone out of fashion.

'Know then this truth; enough for man to know:
Virtue alone is happiness below.'

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"Yes, sir."

"Do you know who said that?"

"No, sir,—unless it was Evangeline?"

Captain Trajane sighed a little wearily. "Alexander Pope, the greatest of English poets excepting Shakespeare. Some day you will read the 'Essay on Man,'—perhaps learn it by heart. It is a noble poem, full of profound thoughts. 'Order is Heaven's first law,' says Pope; and that is true religion: that is the religion of nature,—order, design, harmony. And we have the privilege of learning this order, of inquiring into the ways of the Supreme Being. We need not cringe before him; that is superstition.—'Mea culpa! Mea culpa!'—We should honor him, but without fear. If God created man, how can He be angry with his own creation? No, man is naturally good. His instincts are right. It is tyrants who have made discord and set men at war with each other."

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"Yes, sir."

"Have you any questions to ask?"

Michel shut his eyes and dived. "And the tyrants, grandfather—who made them?"

"Selfishness and Greed made them. Ambition made them. Do you not remember the story of Pompey in Plutarch? That proves how ambition can pervert the best of men."

"But I thought you wanted me to be ambitious, sir."

"Ambitious, yes, but only in good directions. Be ambitious for humanity, not for yourself. I want you to study hard in order to be of service to your fellow men. Science and history are the two most useful branches of knowledge. Some day, I expect, you will be a great scientist."

Michel felt a kind of fright at the old man's positiveness of statement. The irrevocability of a career already marked out and calculated, seemed just then to snatch his boyhood, with

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all its privileges of freedom, out of his grasp. Some blind instinct of self-defense made him resolve to fight for it before it should be too late.

"I hope so, too, grandfather," he began, with a dry, pinched feeling in his throat and a sense of coldness in the palms of his hands. "But—but suppose it did n't turn out that way!"

"Why should n't it turn out that way?" asked the captain gravely.

Michel stammered along somehow. "Well, sometimes I think perhaps I might n't make a very good scientist. I don't know. Perhaps I might go to the Grand Banks with Captain Béjean on the Soleil. I think it would be nice there. And"—he hesitated, half hoping that the old man would interrupt; but the silence was unbroken—"And I dare say," he finished, "there are a good many Wonders of Nature to be seen down there."

The last remark was hazarded as a palliation

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of the rashness that went before. To be interested in the Wonders of Nature was one of Captain Trajane's favorite counsels.

Another silence supervened, during which the captain puffed steadily at his pipe, and Michel waited tremulously for his reply. He did not feel sorry that he had spoken that way; he only wondered how he had ever found the courage to do it; he seemed suddenly so small and stupid beside his grandfather.

At last the old man spoke, as quietly as if he had not just been struck where it hurt most. "You will not be forced to make any decisions against your will, my boy," he said; "only I am anxious to see you always choose the best, and from the worthiest motives. The Wonders of Nature are about us everywhere; we do not need to go seeking them. The smallest stone by the road has a history as marvelous as the sun itself; the farthest star you can see is no more instructive than a blade

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of grass at your feet. 'The spider's touch, how exquisitely fine!' says Pope. A man could study the Wonders of Nature all his life and never leave his front yard."

He gazed before him for a moment in rapt contemplation; then he broke out: "And all this the Supreme Being made for man. He it is who contrived all the laws of the universe; who set the whole mechanism in motion. What more splendid employment for man than to try to ascertain those laws by the aid of his reason? It is finding out the thoughts of the Creator himself! — *the thoughts of the Creator himself!*"

Certainly there was never a more reverent spirit than Captain Trajane's. His soul stood in perpetual adoration before the majesty of the universal order. He knew nothing of the actual methods of science, nor of the doubts which the conscientious adoption and application of them have cast upon those very

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assertions that, to his mind, the word science stood for above all. Universal law ! Design, fitness, everywhere ! Evolution from lower to higher, always up and up, until the final stature of man could not even be guessed at. Virtue, love, justice, reverence, — fundamental qualities of human nature !

All that lacked was that men should know these things to profit by them ; and then the epoch of universal peace and brotherly regard ! No Garden of Eden or Fool's Paradise ; no place of indolence or sensuous gratification ; but a civilization industrious, intellectual, virtuous ! — of this happy future for the race Captain Trajane loved to dream and to discourse. To have a share in bringing it about — somehow — vicariously, if need be, through the service of the one who was dearest to him in the world, and who should realize at last all that he had failed of realizing himself — was his fondest aspiration.



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Yet he must not force the boy. He had lived long enough to know that salvation must come from within. Only he would try to make the career of scientist attractive to Michel,—whose lack of enthusiasm he could not understand,—and he would leave the issue to be decided by time.

VII

OUT of Scaramouche, three miles down the shore, came Johnny McPhee, musician. He was equally an expert on the fiddle, the concertina, the mouth-organ, and the pipes, — though these last, seeing that he was not in a country of Scots, were looked upon by his acquaintances more as a decorative than as a useful accomplishment. To know the pipes made him more of a musician, — was greatly to his credit, — for they must be difficult beyond words ; but how any one could wish to dance to such barbarous, wheezy, *sacré* music as that, surpassed comprehension !

Now the mouth-organ ! — Well, you should only hear Johnny McPhee play “ Chasse les Moutons ” on the mouth-organ, if you have any doubts of its belonging amongst the company of honorable instruments. The very

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first bar, frail but distinct, went to your head and set your feet a-twitching. Oh, the sudden slides and leaps, the indescribable vivacity, the graces and flourishes he put into that familiar tune, yet always in perfect time, beating out the measure with one foot, his face kindling with the fantastic humor of the thing, his whole body quivering in unison with it, until you seemed to look no longer upon poor Johnny McPhee, the most ramshackle piece of human machinery that ever came out of Scaramouche, but upon some disinherited faun, cast out (for insubordination, perhaps) from the rout of Pan, and reduced, for very want, to pipe and dance for his living along the rough ways of humanity. In his lips the mouth-organ became a thing of intoxication: it whimpered, it giggled, it shrieked with shrill mirth; it cajoled, wheedled, mimicked, was brazen in mockery; it was everything that is reckless and care-

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free, the very spirit of vagabond, earth-born hilarity.

This is what Johnny McPhee could do for you on the mouth-organ. It was his favorite vehicle of expression. It knew him better (*ça me connaît mieux*), he said, than the fiddle; and you could do more things with it than with the accordion, even if it did not make so much noise.

Apart from this musical prowess of his, which made him indispensable wherever a dance was being projected, not much could be said for the virtuoso of Scaramouche. Johnny's father was a Hiellan'man from somewhere round Whicogamagh in the interior of Cape Breton, and his mother was a poor French girl of Scaramouche; and a marriage had somehow been patched up between them at the last minute; but at the end of four or five years Johnny McPhee *père* had taken a sudden departure for the Sydney mines, leaving Suzon

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and Johnny McPhee *falls* behind. They did not greatly mourn his departure, it appeared. Suzon got along as well as she could on nothing; and despite the fact that she still had the remains of a handsome figure, there was never a word said against her, no, not even by those who had threatened to drive her out of Scaramouche at a cart's tail before her marriage.

Johnny McPhee was not more than ten when his performances on the mouth-organ first attracted notice; and from that time on his life had been professionally bound up with all that was festive and parti-colored in the chronicles of Port l'Évêque and its vicinity. Now, at the age of thirty-five or thereabouts, he was the solitary inhabitant of the tiny house in which poor Suzon had finally ended her starveling fight with the universe. There were, however, no longer any visible reminders of that struggle. Johnny had a passion for the ornamentation of life.

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At the four corners of the diminutive, white-fenced yard stood tall blue posts, each bearing aloft a gay and highly elaborated bird-house. That no feathered songsters came to habit there was a perpetual disappointment to the lavish provider ; but he never gave up hope : it seemed incredible that any sensible creature should prefer to live in a scrawny tree or on the wet ground, when a snug cottage with a front door and a chimney awaited it. To make up for the air of activity which the vainly solicited tenants of the bird-houses would have furnished, he had erected, on one of the gate-posts, a brightly colored toy windmill, and on the other a wooden Jolly Tar, with revolving oar-blades in his stout arms ; and with every puff of wind round spun the windmill ; over and over, faster and faster, flew the Jolly Tar's paddles ; while hens cackled and roosters strutted about the graveled yard, and broods of chickens scam-

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pered hither and thither, and the creator of it all smoked the pipe of proprietary content on the doorsill.

Céleste, who had a relative in Scaramouche, had once witnessed this very scene of idyllic well-being, and her simple imagination had been profoundly stirred by it.

“Oh, the comfort that one could have there!” she exclaimed to Michel afterward. “Like living in a walnut shell, so snug and tight. Only I could not help noticing that there was only a stone for step, which is not decent; and things were not too neat, for that matter. What it needs is a woman to manage that, — c’est sûr.”

Michel’s curiosity was aroused. “And a matelot, you said, Céleste, with oars that turned in the wind?”

“Oui, c’est ça, over and over, like that” — Céleste flung her stout arms through a stiff aerial circle — “just like the real life. Oh, it

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was of an ingeniousness! Never have I seen its like—*jamais de la vie!*”

“Oh-h-h!” sighed Michel hungrily. “I wish I could see that.”

“We might make a promenade by there some day, if m’sieu your grandfather permitted. I have a relative in Scaramouche.”

The opportunity came before the end of a fortnight, one Saturday afternoon when Michel was not in school.

“My grand-aunt Marthe, in Scaramouche,” said Céleste to the captain, “she said to me that if I would come there some day, she would let me have two dozen of young cabbage plants. She has some of a growth very advanced for this season of the year. I thought of going this afternoon.”

“An excellent idea, Céleste,” commented Captain Trajane.

“And if Michel might accompany me, m’sieu,” pursued Céleste, glorying in her

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subtlety, "he would be of help in carrying the basket."

Just why the real design of the trip should be so swaddled in darkness was not clear to Michel. You would have thought from Céleste's elaborate subterfuge, which was the result of days of mental application, that it must be to lend color to an expedition of the most discreditable nature. However, it did not greatly matter, since his grandfather, without so much as a look at Céleste's flushed but otherwise expressionless face, gave his permission.

They set off early in the afternoon, while the sun was still high in the south. It might have been noticed that Céleste was decked out in a costume which was somewhat out of keeping with the homely errand of seeking two dozen cabbage plants at one's grand-aunt's. Her stocky person, as undifferentiated in its lineaments as a female from a toy Noah's Ark,

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was constrained into a taut blue dress, which had been worn only thrice since Easter; and on her head was fastened a small hat, adorned with a rosette of faded blue velvet. Céleste was of a thrifty, not to say penurious habit of mind; but this afternoon there was about her appearance all the splendor of a fête day.

Somewhat impressed by this unexpected richness of attire, Michel kept a more dignified and formal demeanor than common as they left the town behind them and took the upper road for Scaramouche. It was an afternoon of perfect midsummer. Below, the bay trembled and shadowed purple under the gusts of a southwest breeze.

“It is a very pleasant day for a promenade in the country, n'est-ce pas?” observed Michel, by way of suitable conversation.

Céleste did not say anything for a few seconds. Then she looked at him suddenly. “Eh, — quoi?” she asked.

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"It is fine weather for a promenade in the country," repeated Michel.

"Oh, yes, it is so, indeed," responded Céleste, with an air of not having heard his remark.

That was about all they said. But Michel did not mind, for at best Céleste was not an absorbing conversationalist. And to-day, full as his mind was of happy anticipation, he felt more than ever the mood of the sun-drenched afternoon stirring in his heart. He would not have known how to put such a feeling into words; it was a vague sense of kinship, perhaps, or of something even closer and more thrilling than kinship, as if he had been himself a very part of this harmony of earth and heaven and ocean. It was a delight too deep even and too obscure to claim existence in its own right; only it gave a special quality of nearness and vitality to all the small incidents of the journey, — the gleam of green

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fields at a certain turn of the road, the bleat of a tiny lamb that stood beside its mother on a ledge of gray rock while they passed close under, a flight of ducks that streamed by far overhead, with shrill, faint cries. And finally, there was Scaramouche, lying at the foot of the hill below, its little red-roofed houses straggling haphazard along the curve of a shallow green harbor.

"Are we almost to Johnny McPhee's?" inquired Michel.

"It is just at the bottom of the hill, there where the road bends. Do you see the row of small willows beside it? C'est gentil, hé?"

"Oui, c'est très gentil, Céleste," responded Michel. And then, — "It seems as if I could hear music from there."

They halted a moment to listen. There could be no doubt about it. Thin, reedy snatches of melody rippled up to them.

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Céleste's face lighted in homely ecstasy, and then a flush swiftly overspread it.

"Let us hurry," urged Michel. "Perhaps he might stop before we got there."

But Céleste seemed overcome by sudden reluctance. "Non, non," she stammered. "I — it might be better to wait here a while. It might be — perhaps he would find it an interruption if we walked by too soon."

"Oh, please, Céleste!" begged Michel. "I am sure I can't wait any longer."

They went down the hill together, Céleste walking as if in a kind of daze, dragging her unwilling feet; Michel ahead, barely checking his impulse to run, looking back appealingly every third step at his companion, whose conduct he did not in the least comprehend.

The music grew clearer as they approached the abode of Johnny McPhee. It was something riotous and fantastic, full of capricious turns and flourishes.

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"O mon Dieu!" exclaimed Céleste, almost under her breath, "it is 'Chasse les Moutons.'"

"And there is the sailor man," cried Michel. "His arms are turning."

He became suddenly oblivious of decorum, scampered ahead, and stationed himself directly opposite Johnny McPhee's front gate, with eyes riveted in admiration upon the marvelous contrivance. It was exactly as Céleste had described, only more fascinating. Everything else was exactly as Céleste had described, only more fascinating: the smartly turning windmill on the other side of the gate, the wonderful little bird-houses aloft on their blue posts, the hens and chickens running contentedly about the diminutive yard; and there on the threshold, mouth-organ to lips, sat Johnny himself, all alone, his face beaming with the whimsical extravagance of "Chasse les Moutons," one foot thumping out the

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measure on the broad flat stone that served for step.

A moment later he reached the end of a set, and began wiping the harmonica with a dirty red handkerchief.

"You like the sailor, hé?" he inquired, in a kind if somewhat cackling voice.

"Oui, m'sieu ! Il est superbe !" exclaimed Michel. "I never saw anything like that."

"The wind keeps him busy, hé," said Johnny, with a laugh. "But for all that he never seems to get tired."

Céleste had come up with her too froward charge by this time, and she stared at Johnny in scarlet embarrassment, unable to say a word.

"Bon jour, madame. This is your little boy, madame?" inquired he, amiably, though not rising from his seat.

"Oh, non, m'sieu !" ejaculated Céleste; and on top of that, blurting out, "Me, I am not

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married, m'sieu." Then confusion overcame her quite. What had she said! What accursed stupidity had made her put it like that! She held to a picket of the white fence, scarcely able to stand for mortification.

Johnny laughed,—if you could call his queer throaty cackle a laugh,—and appeared to be looking her over.

"Perhaps you have chosen wisely," he said, with the gallant implication that countless occasions for choice had been hers. "All the pleasures of life do not go to the married. Now if I was blessed with a wife she might not let me sit here in the door playing the mouth-organ. 'Va-t-en!' she would say, 'lazy that you are. Can you find no work to be done? Ouffe! Dépêche-toi! Br-r-r!'" (He imitated a physical send-off.)

Céleste broke out, over a gasping smile: "Oh, m'sieu! the fine ideas you have there!"

"Well, sometimes I do not feel quite so

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certain about it," he went on generously. "A wife could do many things for you."

"She could cook," hastily interjected Céleste.

"And wash," said Johnny McPhee.

"She could keep things tidy," suggested Céleste, entranced at her unexpected flow of ideas.

"Yes, and milk the cow," said Johnny McPhee, — "which I have never felt to be man's work."

"Yes, and feed the chickens," added Céleste, continuing the antiphon of domesticity. "Oh, 'y a infiniment d'choses — there is no end to what she could do."

"I suppose she would mend one's clothes," said Johnny McPhee, looking ruefully askance at the holes in his trouser knees.

"Assurément," agreed Céleste, "and so neatly that they would look like new. A man cannot do those things. He is helpless as a babe. All men are like that."

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"You interest me greatly, mam'selle," observed Johnny, with guarded encouragement. "I shall think these matters over."

"O m'sieu!" gurgled Céleste adoringly. "The ideas you have!"

Michel interrupted. "Did you make it all yourself, monsieur?"

"What? The sailor? Yes, absolutely; as well as all these other objects. I have a veritable genius for useless things."

"Are there birds in the little houses?" pursued the boy. "I do not see them."

Johnny sighed tragically. "No, not yet. I saw some birds examining them with interest a little while ago. I think they will be coming back before long to make their nest there. That's one reason I was playing my mouth-organ. I thought it might entice them."

"I am sure it would!" exclaimed Céleste. "It's all that there is of enticing."

"Mademoiselle," replied Johnny McPhee,

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with unction, rising to his feet and making a crazy, lop-sided bow, — “Mademoiselle, you intoxicate me. On a compliment so sincere and of the heart, I could live a week without other food.”

Céleste gasped, and brought out another of her “O m’sieu’s!”

“And to prove my appreciation,” Johnny went on, “may I not tender you a slight mark of my respect? This morning, in a remote corner of the small shed behind my house, was laid a beautiful duck egg, — the first of the season, for my duck has been rebellious. Will you, perhaps, do me the honor of accepting so humble a tribute?”

Johnny McPhee had been born with the gift of tongues, and the grand manner of courts sat upon him as easily as upon a vice-roy of Madrid. Céleste was flatly overcome. She tried to reply, but could not; the words caught; her tongue was paralyzed.

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"I will bring it," said Johnny, turning into the house, "if mam'selle will have the bounty to excuse my absence one moment."

Céleste looked at Michel. "What am I going to do?" she whispered raucously. "I am stupid as a woodcock."

"I never saw a man like him before," said Michel, in admiration.

Johnny McPhee returned, bearing the egg in a white saucer. "May I make bold to inquire," he asked suavely, "the name of the lady who honors me by accepting this slight offering?"

"Céleste La Vache, m'sieu, s'il vous plaît," answered she, candidly, "who lives at Captain Trajane's in Port l'Évêque."

"Strange I had not heard before of her celestial charms," quoth Johnny McPhee, with a grin at his witticism.

"O m'sieu!" gasped Céleste, her eyes glued to her broad shoes, "I know I am homely and stupid as a woodcock."

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"An honest heart is the most enduring of charms, and the only one that we carry to heaven with us in the end," retorted Johnny, with a Macaberesque chuckle, as he presented her with the egg.

"Yes, at least I am honest," agreed Céleste; "and that is something nowadays. And a good worker, too."

"I can believe that, mam'selle, even without seeing."

"Ah, but you shall see," she broke out impulsively, "if you will sometime stop at our house on your way in to Port l'Évêque. Everything is of a neatness there. And if you like a glass of spruce, there will be plenty. Or tea."

She stopped, out of breath, startled, yet proud, to find herself in the unacquainted rôle of hostess. She hardly heard the words with which Johnny McPhee was thanking her, for her head seemed to be turning round and round

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as she flung open the gate and hurried rapidly back up the hill, Michel following, in surprise, at her wake.

Finally, running abreast of her, "Céleste!" he panted. "But I thought you were going for some cabbage plants."

Céleste halted abruptly; then sat down on a rock beside the road. She rubbed her eyes with her red fists, as if awaking from a dream. Michel did not know whether she was laughing or sobbing, as she buried her face between her elbows and cried, in smothered tones, —

"What have I done, then? What have I done! What are they going to think of me!"

She jumped to her feet and spoke with decision. "No," she said. "I cannot go back again—not possibly. I will tell the Captain Trajane that the duck eggs were too big to transplant."

They made their way homeward in silence, in the calm of the late afternoon. It was not

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until they had come in sight of the captain's little house that the most upsetting idea of all suddenly burst upon Céleste's vision.

"Oh, oh!" she ejaculated. "Mon Dieu Seigneur! What will he believe!"

"Why? Who, Céleste?"

"M'sieu Johnny," she answered, over a short drawn breath. "He will believe—he will believe—oh!—that we went just to see him!"

VIII

ONE of the privileges Michel esteemed most highly was that of accompanying La Rose occasionally when she went blueberrying over on the barrens — *dans les bois*, as the phrase still goes in Port l'Évêque, though it is all of sixty years since there were any woods there. The best barrens for blueberrying lay across the harbor. They reached back to the bay four or five miles to southward. Along the edges of several rocky coves, narrow and steep as a sluice, clung a few weather-beaten fishermen's houses; but there was no other sign of human habitation.

It is what they call a bad country over there. Alder and scrub balsam grow sparsely over the low rocky hills, where little flocks of sheep nibble all day at the thin herbage; and from the marshes that lie, green and mossy, at the

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foot of every slope, a solitary loon may occasionally be seen rising into the air with a great spread of slow wings. A single thread of a road makes its way somehow across the region, twisting in and out among the small hills, now climbing suddenly to a bare elevation, from which the whole sweep of the sea bursts upon the view, now shelving off along the side of a knoll of rock, quickly dipping into some close hollow, where the world seems to reach no farther than to the strange sky-line, wheeling sharply against infinite space.

Two miles back from the inner shore, the road forks at the base of a little hill more conspicuously bare than the rest, and close to the naked summit of it, overlooking all the Cape, stands a Calvary. Nobody knows how long it has stood there, or why it was first erected; though tradition has it that long, long ago, a certain man by the name of Toussaint was there set upon by wild beasts and torn to pieces.

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However that may be, the tall wooden cross, painted black, and bearing on its centre, beneath a rude penthouse, a small iron crucifix, has been there longer than any present memory records—an encouragement, as they say, for those who have to cross the bad country after dark.

“That makes courage for you,” they say.

“It is good to know it is there on the windy nights.”

By daylight, however, and especially in the sunshine, the barrens are quite without other terrors than those of loneliness; and upon Michel this remoteness and silence always exercised a kind of spell. He was glad that La Rose was with him, partly because he would have been a little afraid to be there quite by himself, but chiefly because of the imaginative sympathy that at this time existed so strongly between them. La Rose could tell him all about the strange things that had been seen

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here of winter nights ; she herself once, tending a poor old sick woman at Gros Nez, out at the end of the Cape, had heard the hoofs of the white horse that gallops across the barrens *claquin-claquant* in the darkness.

“ It was just there outside the house, pawing the ground. Almost paralyzed for terror, I ran to the window and looked out. It was as tall as the church door, — that animal, — all white, and there was no head to it.

“ ‘ Oh, mère Babinot, ’ I whispered, scarcely able to make the sound of the words. ‘ It is as tall as the church door and all white. ’

“ She sits up in bed and stares at me like a corpse. ‘ La Rose, ’ she says, — just like that, shrill as a whistle of wind, — ‘ La Rose, do you see a head to it ? ’

“ ‘ No, not any ! ’

“ ‘ Oh, mon Dieu, mon Dieu ! Then it’s sure ! It is the very one, the horse without head ! ’

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“And the next day she took only a little spoonful of tea, and in two weeks she was dead, poor mère Babinot; and that’s as true as that I made my communion last Easter. Oh, it’s often seen hereabouts, that horse. It’s a sign that something will happen, and never has it failed yet.”

They made their way, La Rose and Michel, slowly over the low hills, picking the blueberries that grew thickly in clumps of green close to the ground. La Rose always wore a faded yellow-black dress, the skirt caught up, to save it, over a red petticoat; and on her small brown head she carried the old Acadian *mouchoir*, black, brought up to a peak in front, and knotted at the side.

She picked rapidly, with her alert, spry movements, her head always cocked a little to one side, almost humorously, as she peered about among the bushes for the best spots. And wherever he was, Michel heard her chat-

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tering softly to herself, in an inconsequential undertone, now humming a scrap of some pious song, now commenting on the quality of the berry crop, — Never had she seen so few and so small as these last years. Surely there must be something to account for it. Perhaps the birds had learned the habitude of devouring them, — now addressing some strayed sheep that had ventured with timid bleats within range: “Te voilà, petit méchant! Little rogue! What are you looking about for? Did the others go off and leave you? Eh bien, that’s how it happens, mon petit. They’ll leave you. The world’s like that. Eh, là, là!” . . .

He liked to go to the other side of the hill, out of sight of her, where he could imagine that he was lost *dans les bois*. Then he would listen for her continual soft garrulity; and if he could not hear it he would wait quietly for a minute in the silence, feeling a strange

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exhilaration, which was almost pain, in the presence of the great sombre spaces, the immense emptiness of the overhanging sky, until he could endure it no longer.

"La Rose!" he would call. "Êtes-vous toujours là?"

"Mais oui, mon enfant. What do you want?"

"Nothing. It is only that I was thinking."

"The strange child that you are!" she would exclaim. "You are not like the others."

"La Rose," he would ask, "was it by here that La Belle Mélanie passed on the night she saw the death fire?"

"Yes, by this very spot. She was on her way to Pig Cove, over beyond the Calvary to the east. It is a desolate little rat-hole, Pig Cove, nowadays; but then it was different — as many as two dozen houses. My stepmother lived in one of them. Now there are scarcely six, and falling to pieces at that. La Belle

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Mélanie, she was a Boudrot, sister of the Pierre Boudrot whose son, Théobald, was brother-in-law of my stepmother. That was many years ago. They are all dead now, or gone away from here — to Boston, I dare say."

"Will you tell me about that again,— the *feu follet* and Mélanie?"

It was the story Michel liked the best, most of all when he could sit beside La Rose, on a moss hummock of some rough hill on the barrens. Perhaps there would be cloud shadows flitting like dream presences across the shining face of the moor. In the distance, over the backs of the hills that crouched so thickly about them, he saw the stretch of the ocean, a motionless floor of azure and purple, flecked, it might be, by a leaning sail far away; and now and then a gull or two would fly close over their heads, wheeling and screaming for a few seconds, and then off again through the blue.

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“S’il vous plaît, tante La Rose, see how many berries I have picked already!”

The little woman was not difficult of persuasion.

IX

IT was in November," she began. "There had not been any snow yet; but the nights were cold and terribly dark under a sky of clouds. That autumn, as my stepmother often told me, many people had seen the horse without head as it galloped *claquin-claquant* across the barrens. At Gros Nez it was so bad that no one dared go out after dark, unless it was to run with all one's force to the neighbors,—but not across the woods to save their souls. Especially because of the *feu follet*.

"Now you must know that the *feu follet* is of all objects whatever in the world the most mysterious. No one knows what it is or when it will come. You might walk across the barrens every night of your life and never encounter it; and again it might

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come upon you all unawares, not more than ten yards from your own threshold. It is more like a ball of fire than any other mortal thing, now large, now small, and always moving. Usually it is seen first hovering over one of the marshes, feeding on the poison vapors that rise from them at night: it floats there, all low, and like a little luminous cloud, so faint as scarcely to be seen by the eye. And sometimes people can travel straight by it, giving no attention, as if they did not know it was there, but keeping the regard altogether ahead of them on the road, and the *feu follet* will let them pass without harm.

“But that does not happen often, for there are not many who can keep their wits clear enough to manage it. It brings a sort of dizziness, and one's legs grow weak. And then the *feu follet* draws itself together into a ball of fire and begins to pursue. It glides over the hills and flies across the marshes,

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sometimes in circles, sometimes bounding from rock to rock, but all the while stealing a little closer and a little closer, no matter how fast you run away. And finally—bff! like that—it's upon you—and that's the end. Death for a certainty. Not all the medicine in the four parishes can help you.

“Indeed, there are only two things in all the world that can save you from the *feu follet*, once it gets after you. One is, if you are in a state of grace, all your sins confessed; which does not happen often to the inhabitants of Pig Cove, for even at this day Père Galland reproaches them for their neglect. And the other is, if you have a needle with you. So little a thing as a needle is enough, incredible as it may seem; for if you stick the needle upright—like that—in an old stump, the *feu follet* gets all tangled up in the eye of it. Try as it will, it cannot free itself; and meanwhile you run away, and are safe

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before it reappears. That is why all the inhabitants of the Cape used to carry a needle stuck somewhere in their garments, to use on such an occasion.

“ Well, I must tell you about La Belle Mélanie. That is the name she was known by in all parts, for she was beautiful as a lily flower, and no lily was ever more pure and sweet than she. Mélanie lived with her mother, who was aged almost to helplessness, and she cared for her with all the tenderness imaginable. You may believe that she was much sought after by the young fellows of the Cape—yes, and of Port l'Évêque as well, which used to hold its head in the air in those days; but her mother would hear nothing of her marrying.

“ ‘You are only seventeen,’ she said, ‘ma Mélanie. I will hear nothing of your marrying, no, not for five years at the least. By that time we shall see.’

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“And Mélanie tried to be obedient to all her mother's commands, difficult as they often were for a young girl, who naturally desires a little to amuse herself sometimes. For even had her mother forbidden her to speak alone to the young men of the neighborhood, so fearful was she lest her daughter should think of marriage.

“Eh bien, and so that was how things went for quite a while, and every day Mélanie grew more beautiful. And one Saturday afternoon in November she had been in to Port l'Évêque to make her confession, for she was a pious girl. And when she went to meet her companions in order to return to Pig Cove with them, they said they were not going back that night, for there was to be a dance at the courthouse, and they were going to spend the night with some parents by marriage of theirs. Poor Mélanie! She would have been glad to stay, but alas, her poor mother, aged and help-

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less, was expecting her, and she dared not disappoint the poor soul.

“So finally one of the young men said he would put her across the harbor, if she did not mind traversing the woods alone; and she said, no, why should she mind? It was still plain daylight. And so he put her across. And she said good-night to him and set off along the solitary road to the Cape, little imagining what an adventure was ahead of her.

“For scarcely had she gone so much as a mile when it had grown almost night, so suddenly at that time of the year does the daylight extinguish itself. The sky had grown dark, dark, and there was a look of storm in it. La Belle Mélanie began to grow uneasy of mind. And she thought then of the *feu follet*, and put her hand to her bodice to assure herself of her needle. What then! Alas! It was gone, by some accident, whether or not she had lost it on the road or in the church.

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“With that Mélanie began to feel a terror creep over her ; and this was not lessened, as you may well believe, when, a few minutes later, she perceived a floating thing like a luminous cloud in a marsh some long distance from the road. The night was now all black ; scarcely could she perceive the road ahead, always winding there among the hills.

“She had the idea of running ; but alas, her legs were like lead ; she could not make them march in front of her. She saw herself already dead. The *feu follet* was beginning to move, first very slow and all uncertain, but then drawing itself together into a ball of fire, and leaping as if in play from one hummock of moss to another, just as a cat will leave a poor little mouse half-dead on the floor while it amuses itself in another way.

“What the end would have been, who would have the courage to say, if just at this moment, all ready to fall to the ground for

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terror, poor Mélanie had not bethought herself of her rosary. It was in her pocket. She grasped it. She crossed herself. She saluted the crucifix. And then she commenced to say her prayers; and with that, wonderful to say, her strength came back to her, and she began to run. She had never run like that before—swift as a horse, not feeling her legs under her, and praying with high voice all the time.

“But for all that, the death-fire followed, always faster and faster, now creeping, now flying, now leaping from rock to rock, and always drawing nearer and nearer, with a strange sound of a hissing not of this world. Mélanie began to feel her forces departing. She was almost exhausted. She would not be able to run much more.

“And suddenly, just ahead, on a bare height, there was the tall calvaire, and a new hope came to her. If she could only reach it! She

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summoned all her strength and struggled up. She climbs the ascent. Alas, once more it seems she will fail! There is a fence, as you know, built of white pales, about the cross. She had not the power to climb it. She sinks to the ground. And it was at that last minute, all flat on the ground in fear of death, that an idea came to her, as I will tell you.

“She raises herself to her feet by clinging to the white palings; she faces the *feu follet*, already not more than ten yards away; she holds out the rosary, making the holy sign in the air.

“‘I did not make a full confession!’ she cries. ‘I omitted one thing. My mother had forbidden me to have anything to do with a young man; and one day when I was looking for Fanchette, our cow, who had wandered in the woods, I met André Babinot, and he kissed me.’

“That was what saved her. The *feu follet*

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rushed at her with a roar of defeat, and in the same instant it burst apart into a thousand flames and disappeared.

“As for Mélanie, she fell to the ground again, and lay there for a while, quite unconscious. At last the rain came on, and she revived, and set out for home; but not very vigorously. Ah, mon Dieu! if her poor mother was glad to see her alive again! She embraced her most tenderly, and with encouraging voice inquired what had happened, for Mélanie was still as white as milk, and there was a strange smell of fire in her garments, and still she held in her hand the little rosary; and so finally Mélanie told her everything, not even concealing the last confession about André, and with that her mother burst into tears, and said:—

“‘Mélanie,’ she said, ‘I have been wrong, me. A young girl will be a young girl despite all the contrary intentions of her mother. To show how grateful to God I am that you are

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returned to me safe and sound, you shall marry André as soon as you like.'

"So they were married the next year. And there is a lesson to this story, too, which is that one should always tell the truth; because if La Belle Mélanie had told all the truth at the beginning she would not have had all that fright.

"And to show that the story is true, there were found the marks of flames on the white fence of the calvaire the next day; and as often as they painted it over with whitewash, still the darkness of the scorched wood would show through, as I often saw for myself; but now there is a new fence there." . . .

X

EVERY four years in Port l'Évêque comes the procession of Corpus Christi. Michel, advanced to the dignity of fifteen years, remembered vividly how beautiful it had seemed to him as a little boy of eleven, and he looked forward eagerly to its recurrence on a Sunday of early June.

“We must get a good place, La Rose,” he had said, “where we can see all the march.”

“On the upper street,” she suggested, “a little way from the old Calvary—that is where we will put ourselves. You can see everything from up there,—the coming out of the church doors and the passing on the street below; and then they mount through the field, you remember, and there is Benediction at the calvaire. It is always like that. Oh, it

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is sure there exists nothing in the world of more splendid."

Throughout Port l'Évêque the flags were up that morning: Union Jacks, and tricolors, and bright banners displaying such legends as "O Salutaris Hostia," or "Gloire à notre Seigneur." Home-made rugs of gaudy patterns flaunted from windows along the processional route and bedecked the low white fences; ranks of scarlet-blooming geraniums in pots and tins made gay the doorsteps. In a straggling multitude by the roadside were gathered the faithful of the four parishes, attired as befitted a great fête. Devout expectancy was on every face. A quarter of an hour passed; a half hour. From the interior of the tall white edifice, gleaming like a block of snow in the wan sunlight of June, you could hear the frequent rumbling of the organ and the droning sound of responses.

"Some patience, — that is what it needs,"

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sighed La Rose. "There is no doubt but they will come; only it is not very easy for old legs like mine to stand so long."

At that moment Gabrielle began to ring out above them, sprinkling her thin quavering music through the air like the holy water from an aspergillum; and immediately the broad doors flung open wide. A murmur of relief and satisfaction went up from the crowd, and there was a general spreading of the ranks in the vicinity of the church.

"Regarde voir!" exclaimed La Rose. "There is that Zacharie. Even in a cassock he looks more like an insect than a man."

Down the steps behind him and out into the spring breeze there was a flutter of white veils under purple banners; next the flashing crimson of the priests' vestments, and the crimson and white of the acolytes'; then the resplendent canopy under which, in its gold monstrance, the Host was borne; and last,

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the motley choir, always out of step, singing psalms of joy in thin voices.

Along the street, as the procession slowly advanced, the people knelt. There was a halt of some minutes at an improvised altar, while the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament was pronounced; then the joyous company turned up the hill by the green lane that led through the field to the upper street.

Michel watched in speechless delight. The grass, still in its first verdure of spring, was a carpet of gold-green, against which the trailing brilliance of the procession stood out in a startling relief. And there, behind everything, over the red roofs of the houses below and the gray wharves and stores, spread the harbor, pale blue, rimmed by its strip of emerald cape, and beyond that, under a line of haze, the purple bay.

As the procession turned once more and came toward them on the winding, grass-

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grown highway, Michel recognized Eugénie among the convent girls. Like the others, she was all in white, with the long gauze veil, in which she had made her first communion, flowing lightly to her knees, and upon her forehead a slender crown of artificial lilies-of-the-valley. In her white-gloved hands was tightly clasped the staff of a white and gold banner, which bore the embroidered words :

ECCE PANIS ANGELORUM.

Michel felt a proud thrill at the sight of her; she was so ineffably lovely, — lovelier than anything he had ever seen before in his life, — and she was his old playmate.

“It will be pleasant when she sees me,” was the thought that came to him; and he stepped the least bit forward, tasting already the distinction that her look would give him, as it singled him out from among the hundreds that lined the roadside.

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Then he dropped to his knees beside La Rose, who was praying diligently, and waited. From that moment he looked at nothing, thought of nothing but Eugénie. She was coming toward him; she was passing there close before his very eyes, her cheeks a little flushed with the excitement of the morning, her veil rippling in the cool breeze, her eyes gazing steadfastly at the road just ahead, as if to shut out every worldly thought. She had passed him.

His eyes followed, clung to her during the short halt for the second Benediction, refused to leave her for one instant, until at last she was lost to view among the white-veiled company now approaching the church. At that moment he was suddenly aware of a sharp, stinging pain below his throat. His heart was beating wildly, and his eyes were hot and smarting. He looked up blindly at La Rose. She had risen to her feet and was waiting.

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"Allons, mon petit," she laughed. "There you are grown very pious of a sudden. But it is not me, surely, who would interrupt."

Michel drew his hand quickly across his forehead and stood up, with a meaningless laugh, not knowing what to say. The choir had begun the "Te Deum" now, and the people were trooping into the church.

"Well," she said, "we must hurry. There will be a sermon of the most superb."

Michel shook his head. "If you don't mind, La Rose, I think I won't go in to-day."

She cast a sharp, inquisitive glance into his face; then puckered her brows in perplexity.

"The queer boy that you are," she commented. "You are probably going for one of your strange walks on the barrens, just when here is a fine chance for you to be saving your poor little soul. However," she ended softly, as they reached the church steps, "that

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is not for me to decide, Michel. Only be sure I shall say two or three little prayers for you between times."

With a half-whimsical shake of her finger, she was gone; and the boy, whose impulse she had rightly conjectured, turned absently across the high street and up the hill toward the open land behind the town. He stumbled along without taking any conscious note of his steps, until he reached the back of the low ridge where the fields ended and the barrens began. He leaped over the fence and turned instinctively toward the east, now following a winding little sheep-path among low spreading balsams; now a rough track left perhaps by some water-cart that had gone in a dry summer to one of the small lakes of the region. Then he crossed a low wide marsh, jumping recklessly from hummock to hummock, sure-footed as an animal.

At last he reached the spot he loved best,

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— a sort of niche on the side of a rocky, almost verdureless hill, elevated enough so that he could see off over the whole extent of this strange, tenantless country, yet quite sheltered from the wind and from the view of any chance passers on the Barrassois road behind. He threw himself down on a patch of thin grass, and lay there, staring off across the barrens and the narrow reach of blue sea that was visible through a dip in the Barrassois hills three miles away.

Michel was not thinking; but his senses were almost preternaturally alert, — every nerve tingled. His mind was a tumult, which he made no effort to control. He only knew that he was profoundly and utterly unhappy.

That Eugénie Beauséjour had not noticed him there on the high street was of itself scarcely worth a second's regret. He had understood perfectly well that she was performing a religious office, and that in her

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eyes it was no time for the exchange of salutations. What had so suddenly swept over him was a quivering, blinding sense of being shut out; he had never known anything like that before. How happily and demurely she had walked there in the procession under her embroidered banner! He saw her lips again half parted in girlish ecstasy, the bright flush on her cheeks, and the look of serene and untroubled confidence in her eyes. Somewhere, deep down in his being, the realization had come to him that he could have no share in these sweetest moments of hers, — nor of all that eager, joyous, adoring throng, who carried the same divine assurance in their hearts. They had entered the doors of the church after the body of their God — “Behold the bread of angels,” it had read on her banner — and then the doors had shut; and he had remained outside.

That was what hurt him. They would

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have been glad enough to let him follow; but he was shut out.

For one moment, as he lay there in his solitary eyrie, Michel felt a wild indignation at his grandfather; it was he who had made all this impossible for him, who had brought him up not to believe any of these things that had so much happiness in them for other people. He saw himself walking forever in isolation, in the midst of all his companions, excluded from having any part in what they held dearest.

Michel had never felt a loneliness like that before. He buried his head between his two outstretched arms, and lay there for a long time—he did not know how long—without moving, overwhelmed by his misery. . . .

And then slowly, imperceptibly almost, the moors began to exert their mysterious powers of restoration: a ministry so silent, so patient,

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so inarticulate, that although Michel had for years had this habit of seeking them when anything troubled him, he would have been the last to know how to account for it. It was a thing he felt, not comprehended.

The first little rills of that vast resurgent life about him began to insinuate their way into his consciousness.

He heard the swift, shrill cry of a gull, and there flashed into his mind an image of it, up there, hovering motionless in the pale blue sky, then darting away with a single stroke of long wings.

He felt the tender warmth of the noonday sun on his back; and in his nostrils was the tingling vital smell of growing things.

At last he turned his head and opened his eyes. He saw all the little junipers and balsams quivering in the fresh breeze which was astir over the land.

It was an irresistible sense of life and ac-

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tivity and joy that began little by little to take possession of him, — about him, everywhere, high and low, far away and close under his very body.

Just beyond these hills, over there, circling up and up, — yes, he could detect the living voice of it, among the other voices of the noon, — was the sea.

And the whole round earth was beginning to sing for him — more and more clearly, more and more thrillingly — as it swung through infinite Space. Everything had a part in that divine, immeasurable harmony, the echo, nay, the very music and rhythm of which was in his own being.

Michel got abruptly to his feet, blinking in the sunlight, and brushed the grass off his clothes. He set out for home, walking almost as in a dream. The change had been wrought in him. He did not know how, and did not seek to know. The breath of June exhilarated

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him; made his heart beat with a mad, lovely tumult; made life almost too sweet a thing to be borne. He did not know what his religion was: only that — somewhere — it was always waiting to gladden and uplift and satisfy him.

XI

IT cannot be asserted that poor Céleste's seedling romance was a plant of very rapid or promising growth. At the end of some six years it still appeared, to the outward eye, in much the same condition as within a week of its first sprouting, — a tender sprig, liable, you would have said, to be blighted by the first touch of frost, sure to languish in a summer drought. That no such ill fate came to it was a testimony to her patience and industry. It was watered faithfully; set out in the warm sunshine; protected against the cold; and all the time — if one chose to look at it so — who could tell but that its roots were penetrating deep into the soil, establishing themselves, making ready for a future of promise?

Say what you will, there is plenty of reason for distrusting that pyrotechnical sort of love

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that comes to a sudden, momentary heat, pops with a sunburst of cheap splendor, and is gone. Many lovers have waited longer than Céleste: Jacob, for example, who toiled twice seven years for his heart's desire, and the Sleeping Beauty, whose only solace was dreams for Heaven knows how long a time.

With Céleste La Vache and Johnny McPhee, affairs had promptly reached a certain level of intimacy, and there they had seemed to rest. Johnny had accepted her invitation to stop in, on his way by, for a glass of spruce beer; and from that day on he had become a frequent if not a regular visitor in Céleste's well-scrubbed kitchen. He made himself perfectly at home there, sometimes sitting for hours in unoccupied serenity, his chair tipped back against the wall, his feet comfortably extended upon an old painted sea-chest of the captain's, cob-pipe in mouth, — the very epitome of self-assured and privileged indolence.

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"Céleste, my child," he would say, "will you have the extreme bounty to inform me when it is half-past four? At that time I must go back to Scaramouche to milk that curse of a cow."

"But of course, m'sieu," she would assure him. "Did I ever forget to tell you yet? You can trust Céleste. She is like the hand of a clock."

"I know it well, ma petite," Johnny would exclaim. "You are a miracle of a woman,"—and with that he would settle himself a little more comfortably in his deep-armed, high-backed, snugly-cushioned chair behind the stove.

Céleste giggled. She loved to be called "ma petite"; the subtle humor of it appealed to her; and sometimes Johnny would call her "ma petite alouette," which was still more delicious. But he would never allow her to stop her work to entertain him, or to be entertained. It must

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be that he experienced some pleasant vicarious glow in the mere contemplation of such incessant and scrupulous industry; and as for Céleste, she never thought of reproving him.

“You see he is different from us others,” she earnestly explained one day to La Rose. “He is of a nature which many cannot understand, — not at all like the rest. It is the music in him that makes that. It commands now that way, now this—here, there. Sometimes he must rest, sometimes be busy. He cannot tell beforehand. Sometimes even there is work to be done, and he is compelled to sit there before it, in agony, but unable to raise a finger. It is a misfortune in some ways, but he has no help for it.”

“Did he tell you that?” asked La Rose, with a shade of skepticism in her tone. Unenamored herself of this acolyte of Pan, it seemed to her that his irregularities might be more simply accounted for.

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Céleste retorted with some asperity, "Eh, donc, que voulez vous? Of course he did. Do you think I could have invented all that by myself? Me, I have no ideas. I am nothing but a block of wood. But," — she came back to her cherished certitude, — "at any rate, my heart is honest; and that is something nowadays."

La Rose looked her over from head to foot with a judicial, humorous squint in her small eyes. "Oui, ma Céleste," she announced dryly; "I think you would make a very good wife for him."

The blood flew to the roots of Céleste's straight-brushed hair; but she was not in the least offended by La Rose's liberty of speech. She shrugged her stocky shoulders.

"I might," she answered, — "if he wanted me. I am a good saver. I know how to use the little ends. He would never go to bed hungry, not even if I had to boil my two

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shoes to make a soup of them. But for all that," she concluded pensively, "I do not know for certain if he wants me."

La Rose made a little sputtering noise of impatience. "I am sure," she declared, "that after all this time he ought to have decided. What would he come here so often for if he were not a little touched, hé?"

"For one thing," explained Céleste ingenuously, "I always give him something to drink,—some spruce or a cup of tea; and then he knows that he will be comfortable here, and he likes that. A man is made that way,—to like the comfort. And I think he is often trying to decide, only—there's another thing." She hesitated in obvious indecision.

"You can trust me," said La Rose seductively. "I am a veritable tomb with secrets."

"He has these strange dreams," began Céleste, dropping her voice to an ominous whis-

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per. "He does not know what to make of them. One night he dreamed that he was married to a princess for his bride: all in white, with a silver crown and hair of gold. Oh, *mais elle était ravissante!*—you should have heard him tell me about it, all excited and with a look in his eyes. And again he has dreamed the same dream not a long while ago. He does not know what it could mean; and I can tell it worries him, for sometimes he sighs as he sits there, and that did not use to be so. He was never a man for sighing."

La Rose shook her head sagely. "Some dreams have a meaning," she said. "That is sure. And others do not mean anything. That is sure, too. I would not be surprised if Johnny McPhee's were like that."

Céleste gave her a look of gratitude. "That is what I told him," she said; "but he did not feel quite sure. I think he is waiting to see if he has it again."

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"At all events," said La Rose, "it is certain you are fond of him."

Céleste was pleased. "He is so amusing," she declared. "Sometimes he makes me laugh so as to burst the buttons out of my back. I adore that!"

At the mere thought of Johnny McPhee's witty sallies Céleste shook with irrepressible mirth. "Oh, mon Dieu!" she cried, in stifled tones, "if he is pleasant, that Johnny!"

"That is what Michel says, too," added La Rose. "He has quite an affection for him."

"Yes," agreed Céleste. "Ever since that first day, so long ago, when he saw the sailor man and the windmill, they are some good friends. Johnny will miss him now that he will be away at the College."

"We will all miss him, for that," sighed La Rose, looking out of the window. "It will be no more the same when he is gone. Though perhaps it is for the best. But for me, I cannot

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bear to think about it. And I do not believe he is too glad himself, the poor boy. He does not show very much eagerness. It is always those ideas of his grandfather that make such things come about."

—"But look!" she broke off suddenly. "It is Johnny McPhee now. He is coming in."

"Oh!" gasped Céleste, aurora-colored. "Oh, mon Dieu!"

"I will not stay," put in La Rose, considerably, catching her shawl with a brisk gesture over her small head. She refused to listen to Céleste's flustered protestations.

"I know, I know," she chuckled. "The young girls are always like that. He will be broken-hearted if I leave you alone, c'est sûr!" —and with that she tripped as spryly as a beach bird into the little hall and out by the front door, just as the virtuoso of Scaramouche entered the kitchen.

XII

THE decision that Michel should go away to school had been reached only after the most prolonged and earnest consideration. At the age of sixteen he still lacked a year of completing the course at the Municipal Academy; but his record there was not gratifying to his grandfather, who longed to see the boy excel in his studies. It was natural to impute the blame for his partial failure to the ineptitude of the schoolmaster, whose superannuated methods the captain distrusted. Now if the boy could really have some modern, enlightened, scientific teaching instead of all this perfunctory memorizing of the rules of grammar and of propositions out of Euclid, he would be able to do himself justice.

Something needed to be done. The captain had felt sure of that ever since one day in the

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fall when Mr. McIntyre had told him that Michel was an unpromising pupil, without any of the ambition and application that a healthy boy just turning seventeen should have.

The captain had flared up more hotly than was common with him of late years. "That is untrue, sir," he had retorted, — "grossly untrue ! The mere fact that you can say such a thing is proof enough that you have no real understanding of my grandson. He has plenty of ambition ; he is extremely industrious. You misjudge him because he is not like the others. You must remember, sir, that he has been brought up differently. From the first he has had encouragement to think for himself, to examine everything. He looks at things in his own way."

Mr. McIntyre snapped his false teeth together with a click. "If he would look at them in the right way, it would be better for

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him," he retaliated. "When I was his age, as I well remember, I could recite every rule in both the English and the Latin grammars, beginning at either end of the book, and giving number and page as well."

"I thank God," broke out the captain, "that Michel cannot do that. It would be contrary to the first principles of the education I have given him."

"Education, indeed!" sneered the orthodox pedagogue. "An excellent word, Captain Fougère, for the ideas you have put into that boy's head. You have taught him to be an atheist and a fool; I hope that satisfies you."

The captain controlled himself with an effort and answered calmly: "I would rather have him both of those, Mr. McIntyre, than the man you are trying to make out of him. Michel has an unusual mind, and I do not worry myself either about his atheism or his

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foolishness. You are at liberty to use what terms you like."

Nevertheless, though he would not admit it to any one, Trajane was sincerely troubled. He could not understand the seeming indifference of Michel for books; he wished that he cared more for things of the mind. All his life he had been stimulated and encouraged in intellectual directions; he had been conscientiously shielded from the ordinary prejudices; he had lived in constant and intimate acquaintance with the most noble characters of antiquity. And yet the result which Trajane had hoped for seemed a long way from realization. Michel, to be sure, was far from inattentive; it was evident that he desired to profit by his grandfather's instructions; he spent long hours over his lessons. But there was a failure somewhere. The great calling for which he was being prepared did not arouse his enthusiasm as Trajane would have liked.

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Michel's enthusiasms, indeed, were a source of constant perplexity to the old man. He would rise at two in the morning of a Saturday in order to go out to the fishing grounds in the bay with Martin Levasseur, one of the inshore fishermen, — an ignorant, shiftless lot, those inshore fishermen, for whom the captain had small liking, — and twelve hours later he would come home eager and flushed and excited, not even remembering whether the day's luck had been good or bad. He would go off for a whole afternoon quite by himself, wandering across the barrens, hunting for nothing, apparently ; and when he returned, after sundown, he would seem like another individual, his listlessness all gone, his eyes gleaming and full of strange lights that fairly startled the old man. There was at these moments in the boy's look such an exuberance of vitality ; he seemed tingling with energy and untamed life, alien to the discipline and responsibilities

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of this world. At such times the captain felt a kind of fear of Michel. The unacknowledged suspicion would come to him that there was something obscure and elusive about the boy's nature, something beyond his own understanding, and which he had not succeeded in dealing with effectively.

And sometimes the dread oppressed him — though he fought it off most resolutely; would not look it in the face — that Michel might turn out like the other, whose name he never mentioned, and who had broken his heart. No, that was impossible. There had been some perversity of nature in the other one; — there must have been; — and besides, his education had been ignorantly supervised. Michel was different: he was not intractable or rebellious; he would come out all right, — certainly. Only it was important that the right steps should be taken.

“I am thinking,” he said to him quietly,

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one December evening, "that perhaps next year you should go away to school. I do not feel satisfied with what Mr. McIntyre is doing for you; and besides, you are now old enough to be learning the virtue of self-reliance. At school you would be thrown upon your own resources to a moderate but not excessive degree."

Michel looked suddenly grave. "I suppose so," he said; and then, after a silence: "Would that mean that I must decide right away about that other thing?"

"No, certainly not. That can wait until you are fully ready to make a positive decision. You will not be either forced or hurried. There is an abundance of time. I am not concerned about your learning more than is good for you."

During the winter evenings they often talked of the plan. Céleste La Vache would be bustling rather noisily about the kitchen, washing

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the supper dishes or mixing bread, occasionally breaking out into some favorite melody in that unmelodious voice of hers, which Johnny termed "*cette voix céleste d'une vache*" — a cow singing celestially. Captain Fougère, in carpet slippers and ancient smoking-jacket, sat always in the high-backed rocking-chair beside the base-burner in the small living-room; and across the curling smoke of his clay pipe, which he puffed stolidly, his eyes would rest with fond, meditative intentness upon Michel, seated there at the bare table, chin on hands, bent over his Euclid.

"Yes, my boy," he said, one evening, knocking the ashes out of his pipe, "I am quite convinced that it is right."

Michel did not need to ask what he was talking about. He looked up at the old man with some relief, for he could not seem to get anywhere with his studying that night, and any interruption was welcome.

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There was a little silence, and then Captain Trajane went on: "Though I am going to miss you very much indeed."

An expression that he could not understand flitted quickly across the boy's sensitive lips; then they grew a little constrained. "Sometimes," said Michel, "I do not want to go at all."

"A certain dread is inevitable," said the captain, "in contemplating any radical change. We naturally cling to the old, even when we perceive that the new is more desirable. Is that the explanation of your reluctance?"

"I don't know exactly," answered the boy, hesitatingly. "It seems as if I was a little afraid."

"That sounds like childishness, grandson. What have you to be afraid of?"

Michel felt his heart beginning to pound. "Sometimes I wonder if I will do as well

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as you hope. I do not think I am so very clever."

"You are only a boy yet, Michel. You do not know what you can do. But you must resolve to do your best."

"Oh, I shall do that, sir," he said, with some assurance. "I am going to work very hard. I should like to bring home a prize or two from Prince George's. I think perhaps I will be good in Latin, because I have been to church a good deal with La Rose; and if they have Greek and Roman history I dare say I shall stand high, you have taught me so much already out of Plutarch."

Captain Trajane thought of his own starved youth, of how passionately he would have embraced such an opportunity as this; and a quick feeling of resentment came to him that another should accept it with so little ardor.

"Michel," he exclaimed bitterly, "won't you see what a wonderful chance it is!"

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In that instant he saw himself once more, common sailor aboard the brig *Lucienne*, at anchor a mile off Para, rocking in a heavy land swell, broiling under an equatorial sun. Most of his comrades had gone ashore. He had stayed there behind with his new treasure, Rousseau's "Contrat Social," a tattered paper copy that he had picked up, without knowing what it was, in a bookstall in Rio. What new realms of gold he had traveled that afternoon, — in what an ecstasy of awakened vision, — as he lay on his pile of tarpaulin in the bow! . . . Over there across the brown tide lay the glittering city with all its seductions; he had not cared; for him was being solved the whole enigma of Humanity; he was on heights of thought with his illustrious teacher. By the very violence of his desire he had broken his way into the charmed kingdom of knowledge.

And he cried out once more, "Michel,

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I'd have given my soul for it,—a chance like yours!"

The boy quickly turned his face away from the light; and an instant later the captain saw his shoulders quiver and draw together with a suppressed sob. He got up impulsively and went over to the lad, and put his hand with an awkward gentleness on his soft black hair.

"Cher petit-fils," he broke out tenderly, in the homely French that he so rarely used. "Don't think I'm blaming you. It's only the hunger I have to see you do well,—to achieve some great thing, now that the way is open."

Michel brushed his sleeve across his eyes with a quick, shy gesture, and looked up at him. "Grandfather, I do try, really," he said. "And I want to succeed."

"If that is how you feel, my boy," said Captain Trajane, "you cannot help but suc-

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ceed. The earnest desire is what counts most. Remember how Demosthenes learned to be an orator. It was will power, — will power, my boy, that enabled him to do great things in the cause of Humanity.”

He left the room abruptly and began to fix the fire in the kitchen stove for the night. Michel opened his geometry again to the next day's lesson, and as his reluctant eyes conscientiously traced out the intricate lines of a proof-figure, he was making feverish resolutions for the year that was to come — how he would devote himself day and night to his studies, so as to bring back the record that was expected of him.

XIII

THE week before Michel was to leave for Prince George's, what was announced as a "Grand Pic-Nic et Bal" took place at the Port l'Évêque courthouse, its authorized intention being to raise funds for the repairs on the convent. Piety and pleasure, thus happily wedded, made a double appeal, and great success attended the enterprise. In the grassy open space before the building stood an array of booths and pavilions, gay with bunting; there was music, dancing, junketing, — everything, in short, that could make glad the heart of man, except for what was to be had — if you must have it — over the bar of the Bonheur-aux-Matelots, at the foot of the hill. From time to time not a few resorted thither, and returned full of cheer.

Eugénie and two of her girl friends tended

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one of the booths during the afternoon, selling all manner of cakes, tartines, doughnuts, as well as lemonade and some syrup drinks of seductive rainbow-hues that had been imported from Halifax by the temperance society and were consumed eagerly by many unsuspecting children.

Michel was in attendance at the picnic, but not in a very gay mood, because next week was so close. Every few minutes he would come drifting back rather listlessly to Eugénie's booth and buy a currant cake or a tart, which he would munch in silence as he gazed at all the merry hubbub about him.

"Michel, you look frightfully solemn this afternoon," laughed Eugénie.

"Do I?" he asked. "Well, then come and have a dance. They are just beginning a new set over there."

She shook her head. "I can't. I promised mother. She's very particular. Besides, you

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never know if everybody will behave well in a place like this. Look at that."

She indicated one of the pavilions where, as a "grand right-and-left" was in progress, with much stamping of feet and loud laughter, some corybant, bolder than the others, was attempting to snatch the toll of a kiss from each girl as he swung her by.

"I do not like that," said Eugénie, with a shrug.

"But we could make up a set of our own," urged Michel,— "just the people you wanted; and Johnny McPhee would play for us."

Eugénie pursed her lips. "Perhaps," she conceded. "I am going to stay only until seven. We might have it the last thing."

Michel agreed. "And then I would walk home with you," he proposed.

"We will see," she said.

She turned to a prospective purchaser of

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"Delicious Carbonated Raspberry," and Michel wandered off. He caught sight of Céleste, standing gape-mouthed beside one of the pavilions, and inferring that Johnny must be there, he drew near to watch him.

Johnny was performing on the concertina. He was utterly in his element. Admiration encircled him. He sat on an empty nail keg, leaning back against a corner post of the pavilion, one crazy leg stretched forth at ease, the other beating out the measure, as imperturbable and relentless as the second-hand of destiny. In his physiognomy sat a look of high abstraction. His eyes, small, deep-set, with red lids half-shut, peered infinity in the face. But his thin, bony fingers — how they danced over the stops! How the concertina swelled, tapered, bellied, and contracted, — like some tortured invertebrate, gifted, during its last hour, with unearthly song. The whole crowd that stood there looking on was

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instinctively jigging its feet; heads bobbed in helpless unison; and as for the dancers themselves, they whirled and balanced and performed incredible convolutions, as fatally subject to his whim as the music-mad rats that followed the Pied Piper out of Hamelin town.

Michel refrained from interrupting Céleste at her devotion; but at the end of a figure her eyes happened to fall upon him, and she beckoned him eagerly beside her.

"Stand here, mon ami," she urged — "so! Now you can see him better, n'est-ce pas?"

And a little later, emitting a deep sigh, she whispered, "Only to think that he has sat so often in our kitchen! Eh, but there is a man for you. He is not proud."

The music began again, and Céleste was no longer for this world.

As Michel's eyes chanced to turn back for a moment to the refreshment booth, he no-

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ticed a large red-faced fisherman — a Pole, he thought, from the Gloucester schooner that had put in for bait that morning — leaning on the counter, laughing loudly over some dispute with Eugénie, who did not seem amused. Suddenly the man bent forward toward her, shooting out his lips. Michel saw the girl start back, eyes aflame, and the color flooding her face. She said something, and the fisherman turned away with a foolish look, muttering to himself as he mixed with the crowd.

The same instant Michel was at the booth. “The beast!” he ejaculated between his teeth, while the blood sang in his ears.

“No matter, Michel.” Eugénie laughed nervously, with one hand caught to her bosom, which lifted and sank. “He didn’t know any better. I suppose he thought we did that here; but he won’t think so another time.”

For the rest of the afternoon Michel stayed

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pretty close to the booth ; but the Pole did not reappear. And it was not long before Eugénie told him she was going home. "I am a little tired," she explained. "I think I will not dance, after all. As soon as mother comes to take my place I will leave."

Shortly after six she was free, and they started off together. They turned into the upper street and followed it toward the west, where the tall belfry of the church stood thin and black against a sunset of streaked orange. The road was narrow and grass-grown ; the houses were all below them ; up here everything was open and still.

Neither of them spoke, and each wondered vaguely why the other was so silent. Michel was thinking of the week ahead, when he must say good-by to all these beautiful familiar sights and go away to a place where he had no friends, and where there would be no upper road to walk on, in sight of the harbor

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and the wide bay. He did not feel able to talk himself; but that would not have mattered ordinarily, for Eugénie was the most entertaining of companions. But to-night she did not say a word.

When his eyes turned inquiringly to her, an expression that was new to him and which he could not interpret fled across her face, and she looked quickly in another direction. Something within her had been shocked into its first consciousness by the look in that man's face and by his hot breath; and she still trembled in mingled wonder and shamefastness before it. So short a time ago she had been a mere thoughtless girl; — she had come down this very road that afternoon —

A sharp gasp of fright broke from her. A man had silently come out from Leblanc's upper barn, and he stood facing them, insolently, in the middle of the roadway. It was the same Gloucesterman — whatever might

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be the explanation of his being there at that moment. Apparently it was not altogether accidental, for with a thick, coarse laugh he greeted the girl.

"So you comes at last, leetle pussy. Well, den, I lets you go pass venn you gif what I as' for, see?"

He appeared not to have noticed Michel; but as Eugénie shrank back, the boy stepped between them.

"You leave her alone," he cried.

There was a tingling of blood all through his body that swept every object out of his consciousness except the leering man in front of him, in the midst of a quivering red blur of light. At that moment Michel would have had small chance in a fight with a cool-headed and trained antagonist; but the Pole was neither of these, and furthermore he was rather drunk.

"Go 'long, you puppy," he blurted, with

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a foul oath, at the same time giving him a heavy cuff on the side of the face.

Michel staggered, drew back like a crouching beast of the forest, and then, instantly, with a sharp, snorting cry, leaped straight at the throat of the man, bearing him over with sheer momentum, so that they fell heavily into the roadway.

Eugénie, motionless with terror, saw them roll over and over, the Pole's arms clutching wildly but ineffectually at the boy's hair, neck, clothes, while from his throat came short, whistling gasps, terrible to hear. Michel's legs little by little twisted themselves over and around his opponent's, while his fingers never relaxed their grip; and all the time he emitted little whining noises that did not seem human.

The girl tried to scream but could not. Perhaps a minute passed. The Pole was kicking more weakly. His legs would draw them-

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selves up and then slide out, scraping the ground; and his face was purple, with bulging eyes.

Somehow or other Eugénie succeeded in getting over to them. She thrust her hands firmly upon Michel's wrists; and then her voice came back to her.

"Michel, Michel! Listen! Let go!"

Instantly the boy obeyed her, and seizing him by the shoulders she raised him to his feet and pulled him away. The man in the road lay for a minute on his back, drawing in great gulps of air, his hands to his throat; then he rolled over; lifted up his swollen face; staggered stupidly to his feet, and stumbled away up the road.

Eugénie had made Michel sit down on a little bank by the fence, and with one arm behind his shoulder she was wiping his bloody face with her small handkerchief. His nose had bled profusely, and a bruise was rising on

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his forehead; aside from that he was unhurt. But his eyes were vividly bloodshot, and all the muscles of his body were quivering spasmodically.

He looked at her, but for a moment showed no recognition. Then his eyes caught the blood-stained handkerchief in her fingers.

"Eugénie," he stammered, in a dazed voice. "What happened?"

A more intelligent look came into his eyes then, and he put one hand to his forehead with a startled laugh.

"It's all right, Michel dear," she answered gently. "Don't trouble."

The boy jumped to his feet again. "Is it that man?" he asked hoarsely, staring down the road.

She put her hands restrainingly on his shoulders. "No matter if it is, Michel. He's not coming back. — Michel,—listen! —" She wanted to say something, but did not know

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how. The boy looked at her and saw the tears in her eyes.

"I never did anything like that before," he said wonderingly. "I can't even remember just what happened. All I remember is seeing him stand there; and then we were in the road, were n't we?"

Eugénie shuddered. "Yes," she assented. "But I don't want to think of it now."

"I think I must have been going to kill him," said Michel, in a low, startled voice. "Did you stop me?"

She nodded her head. The boy would have talked of it further, but she begged him not, and he did not insist. Her face was still as white as death. But with an effort she summoned a light laugh to her lips.

"Tiens, mon enfant. You need a good brushing. The dust is an inch deep on you."

He took off his jacket and whipped it against the fence. She picked up his cap from

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the road and slapped what of the dust she could from his trousers. Then she dusted his tangled black hair with her fingers, parted it again, playfully, with one of her combs, and set the cap where it belonged.

“Te voilà un peu propre!” she commented, smilingly critical. “Ah, that’s much better. And now, mon ami, we must hurry, or father will be in a terrible state of mind.”

At the gate she took his hand in both of hers, and he felt them trembling violently.

“Oh, — Michel!” — she said.

Her lip quivered. Michel thought she looked very small and timid; and at the memory of what she had just been through, a quick impulse of tenderness came to him. Abruptly he bent down and kissed her, frankly, as if the old days when they had been playmates had come back again.

To his astonishment she turned without a word of good-by and darted into the house,

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shutting the door behind her. He waited there a couple of minutes in perplexity ; then latched the gate reluctantly, and set out for home by the lower street.

XIV

THE adventure of that afternoon had no sequences, — that is to say, of the external sort. The Gloucester vessel had put out before sunrise the next day, and within a week Michel had taken his departure for Prince George's College.

He would not soon forget that last morning: the limpid radiance of September that bathed all the world in gold; the dewy freshness of the captain's garden, where a few late roses still blossomed on the rose tree; and the little group of friends that had come to the wharf to see him off, — Captain Trajane, of course, and Céleste, and La Rose, Madame Beauséjour and her daughter, and two or three of his old schoolfellows. La Rose and Madame Beauséjour had done the talking, mostly of garrulous commonplaces that filled in time.

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"Oh, the lovely weather!" exclaimed the latter. "Surely it is a good start you are making, Michel."

"'Michel'!" quoted La Rose, in mock-tragical accents. "It is for the last time that we shall be calling him by that name. When he returns I suppose we shall not understand a word of what he says. And it will be M'sieu here, M'sieu there; oh, we shall be quite overcome, we others!"

The boy laughed, but there was a tightening in his throat that prevented him from speaking. He set his lips hard and kept his eyes for the most part on the tip of the Cape, round which the little packet-boat would make its appearance, at any minute now. One hand gripped tightly the old portmanteau his grandfather had brought down from the loft; the other was in a coat pocket, cold and wet with perspiration.

"Ah, there she is," exclaimed Madame

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Beauséjour. "She is quite on time to-day. It is a very good start you are making, Michel, very good."

"Yes, madame," said the boy, and swallowed hard. He wondered how much longer he could stand it. He felt the ties of the old world beginning to strain and snap already, as the little group of friends gathered more closely about him.

Madame Beauséjour kissed him on the cheek with a certain unction. "We wish you a thousand successes," she announced, "all of us, myself, and Eugénie, and my husband."

Céleste La Vache next. She threw her large arms about his neck, sobbing violently.

"Au r'voir, m'n enfant," she choked. "Que l'bon Dieu t'garde!"

La Rose reached up her little wrinkled face to his, and grazed his lips with the fluttering lightness of a bird. "I will be saying my prayers for you every day," she whispered,

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so softly that only he could hear. "It seems to me it is my own boy who departs."

The gang-plank was put out; the mail-bag and a few pieces of freight taken aboard; the little sea-chest trunk followed. The last moment had come.

Captain Trajane seized the boy's left hand and crushed it in both of his.

"Good-by, grandson," he said. "We expect noble things of you."

That was all; and from the steady tone of his voice you would have thought him unmoved. But Michel felt the nervous shaking of his hands.

He ran aboard. At the same moment the gang-plank was taken in, the line thrown off, and the small steamer moved from the dock. Then from the little deck on top of the cabin-house Michel noticed Eugénie. She had not said good-by to him. She stood beside her mother quite motionless, not even waving

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her handkerchief until the boat was well out in the harbor. He wondered about it for a moment; but the incident was promptly crowded out of his mind by the emotions of departure.

Soon the agitated white specks on the wharf seemed to grow calmer, and one by one disappeared. Michel thrust his own handkerchief into his pocket, and stood silently against the rail of the narrow deck, staring shoreward with dry, burning eyes.

The first home-leaving! There is a heart-break there that never comes again, no matter how much more momentous or tragic any later parting may be. How you watch for the last flicker of white—the last farewell—from those who love you, and whom you love,—how dearly you never have known till this moment! How your eyes strain for the last glimpse of the little house on the hill beyond the head of the harbor! How strangely the

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familiar town begins to diminish before your gaze, little by little drawing itself together, retreating into the background, until it is only a broken white line under a strip of green,—floating, poised, between boundless oceans of blue!

And finally, as the point is rounded into the bay, even that is swiftly cut out of sight. Only the tall barrens of the Cape now, sweeping up against a sharp sky-line! . . .

And then, there was Pig Cove, a dozen weather-beaten cottages clinging to the shore of a deep rocky inlet; and behind—suddenly visible against the limpid blue—there stood the leaning calvaire of La Belle Mélanie. On the narrow road that lay close under it, kinked like a thread among the bare hills, two figures were visible, — women, — foxberry pickers, perhaps.

The little steamer passed near a fisherman's dory, rocking sharply on the swell. Michel

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recognized the occupant with a wild start of pleasure.

“Hé, Martin!” he called; but the man did not look up. They were passing to leeward.

He called again, agonizingly, at the top of his voice. “Martin! Martin Levasseur! Halloo!” and waved his cap.

The fisherman was pulling in a line. He raised his grizzled head for an instant and nodded; but it was clear that he did not recognize him against the sunlight; and in a few more seconds they had passed.

For the first time Michel gave way to the hot tears that had been waiting. He sat there alone on the little deck behind the pilot-house, his head in his hands; and he wished that he did not have to make a career.

XV

As for Captain Fougère, he took his way back, not too energetically, along the dull, familiar street and up the hill toward the empty cottage. Céleste accompanied him, not loquacious, sighing most dismally every few seconds, and exclaiming, "Eh, mon Dieu, how everything will be changed now!"

"Céleste," he directed at last, with some severity, "there is nothing to gain in always talking like that. We must exert ourselves to be glad. It is a great chance Michel is having."

"Oui, m'sieu," acquiesced the faithful mourner at his side.

"Not every boy has the privilege of becoming a scholar."

"Non, m'sieu."

"Michel is going to make a name for him-

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self in the world. They will be talking about him."

"Oui, m'sieu," — as she mopped her swollen eyes. — "C'est sûr."

"One of these days we shall see his name in the newspapers."

Céleste halted stock still with a caught breath. "In the newspapers!" she ejaculated. "Our Michel?"

"Assurément, Céleste."

The girl blinked. "Oh, que ce sera gentil!" she exclaimed. "Only to think of it! Our little Michel!"

Her topmost dreams had not attained to such an eminence.

"It is a pity I cannot read, m'sieu," she went on. "But I have an excellent memory. You would perhaps teach little things to me out of the paper, and then I could repeat them to people. I should adore that!"

"I dare say it could be managed," agreed

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the captain. "But we must not expect it in too much impatience. He has a long road to travel yet."

"But he will arrive," put in Céleste, confidently. "No one can help loving Michel, and he never makes the least trouble in the world."

"I have the greatest faith in his success," said the captain.

Céleste had recovered her spirits. "An idea is come to me," she announced. "It is to keep his room always ready for him. That will make us think he may be coming home at night. Oh, we will find ways to deceive ourselves. After all, it is not so long a time before next summer. The cold weather will soon be here, — and then the warm weather."

"Much depends on ourselves," moralized Captain Trajane. "If one is industrious and does not allow one's self to mope and brood, the time passes quickly."

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That remark was made more on his own account than hers. Céleste had never yet shown much inclination to mope and brood. If she was not making her ménage, she was always busy in some other useful way, — knitting socks of coarse white wool, or hooking parti-colored rugs of extraordinary design. No, it was the captain who had that battle to fight; and he girded himself for it with what vigor and resolution he could muster. He was seventy-six now; for seventeen years Michel had been his one thought; not a day had gone by without the boy's development being passed in review, somehow.

And the captain gloried in his achievement, — persisted in glorying in it, with the inveteracy of threescore and ten; would not hear of anything else. His faith found no obstacle insurmountable.

“He is only a boy yet,” he would say to

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himself. "He is growing fast. One must not expect everything at his age."

Life went forward with much the same routine as of old in the trim white house on the hill, except that there were more gaps in the day to be filled, less to look forward to as the afternoon turned into dusk.

During the winter evenings Captain Trajane began work on a desk cabinet intended for Michel's room. There was to be a sloping top that lifted; and inside, pigeonholes, and pen-racks, and a most ingenious secret drawer, to be opened only after the removal of the drawer below had given access to a concealed spring, "and where," said the captain significantly, "he will be able to lay by any scientific papers that it might not do for everybody to see."

Next to receiving Michel's letters, which were short and rather conventional, the greatest delight he had was to talk of his grandson

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and the future ahead of him. That is why La Rose became a more and more frequent and privileged caller ; for this was the dearest of all subjects to her heart. And she seemed to have lost all her old fear of the captain.

“Me voici !” she would announce gayly. “I am just running in for a little instant. I thought to inquire if you might perhaps have heard from the boy again.”

She would loosen her shawl and seat herself on the edge of a chair, alert, restless, always — it seemed — on the point of getting up. La Rose had more wrinkles, even, than of old in her small brown face, and her thin hair was almost white ; but she kept the same eagerness of manner, the same quick, emphatic, incessant gestures that had always characterized her conversation. She was an old woman and a young girl, — just as she had been since the beginning of time.

“Yes, La Rose,” the captain might say ;

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"another letter has just come. Michel is always to be relied on; he does not forget the old people."

"That is certain, m'sieu le capitaine. He is admirable for that. But tell me, then, what is there of news?"

The captain made some show of hunting for the letter. "Where could I have put it, then?"

He fumbled in his pocket. "Ah, at last, here it is. Let me see" — he would open it with great deliberation — "Céleste, my reading-glass, s'il vous plaît."

"I am dying with impatience," groaned La Rose, who greatly relished these moments of well-calculated suspense. "Céleste, surely your legs are made of lead!"

The captain cleared his throat. "This was written two days ago. Let me see. — That must have been Sunday."

La Rose meditated an instant. "Yes," she

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said, "it must have been, for yesterday was Monday."

"It was cold there, he says. There is much snow on the ground."

"Snow!" interjected La Rose. "Just think of that. And here scarcely a flake yet. It is hard to believe!"

"Yes," said Captain Trajane. "And I am sure this is the fourth letter he has said the same thing. It is a different climate from ours."

"That is sure!" agreed La Rose, with a decisive nod. "Quite different — colder, and more snow."

"But he does not mind," went on the captain. "He is quite well, he says, and devoting himself to his studies."

"Ah!" exclaimed the little woman, loyally. "Is not that our Michel! Always industrious. He would never be like the other boys, neglecting his lessons. Often I have seen him

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coming in early from the boat. 'Michel,' I would say, 'you are early to-night.' 'Yes, La Rose,' he would respond. 'I must be at my lessons.' Oh, that has happened many times. He was devoted to his studies."

"Though for that matter," added Captain Trajane, "I do not imagine that he finds them too easy even now."

"That is because he is so ambitious," explained La Rose. "He thinks about everything. He wants to understand. He was always like that, even from the time when, in returning from the church, he used to ask me the droll questions, with his eyes so grave and serious. The questions that boy would ask! And yet always of a good sense; not at all foolish, like the most part of children."

"He has not lost that habit," resumed the captain, with a smile. "His letter is full of questions. He asks about you. He asks if there is ice in the harbor. And are the barrens under

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snow yet, he asks, and if there are any mackerel this month."

La Rose sighed. "Ah, if I only knew how to write! How much I would tell him! I know, me, what he likes best to hear about."

The captain's communications were not long; but they were written with great care, in a large, squarish hand which kept the look of firmness and decision despite the tremble in it. Taxing as the business of penmanship was upon his eyes, he allowed the fact to make not the least difference in the punctiliousness of this cherished duty. And at the end always came the sentence: —

"We talk of you often, and are proud of your success.

"Your affectionate grandfather,

"TRAJANE FOUGÈRE."

There was a flourish about the signature, as of one who remembered the days when he

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had trampled the sea under him, and who dreamed of still greater conquests in the future.

Then he would fold and seal the letter:—

“ Céleste, you will not forget to go to the post to-night. There is something for the boy.”

“ Parfaitement, m'sieu. I would go through snow to my chin rather than let it wait.”

So the weeks and months passed. Winter shut down, sealing up the harbor, burying the world under gleaming white. Then came the first faint intimations of spring. Timidly, in small sun-warmed hollows where the snow had melted, the grass began to show green.

It would not be much longer to wait now, — only a few more months. Would he have changed very much? Would he have grown taller? What if Port l'Évêque should prove dull to him after the splendid new life at the college! . . .

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Every day they talked of these things at Captain Trajane's. You would have thought there was nothing else to look forward to in the world.

XVI

IN a bare room on the top floor of a barrack-like dormitory a boy was dreaming of the end of the year and the return to his own people. When he stared out of the flawed window-pane across the empty "parade," and on, beyond the flat roofs of the town, to the dull, featureless hills, half denuded of their woods, that closed in the view, his eyes did not see them: instead he was looking across the dancing blue harbor of Port l'Évêque, following the long, dipping line of the town, naming lovingly every familiar object on the street, coming to a rest, at last, at the white cottage on the crest of the hill, set off from the roadway by its well-trimmed hedge of arbor-vitæ, behind which, whatever the time of year, he seemed always to see the great rosebush full of white bloom, above its low inclosure of whale-ribs.

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Michel was terribly homesick. He was not succeeding very well in his studies ; he had not found it easy to make friends ; he chafed and worried constantly under the strictness of the school discipline.

Prince George's School — or College, as it was termed — was situated in a small inland town. Though not ostensibly a military institution, its regulations were patterned on a military precedent : the boys did not wear uniforms, but they rose at the summons of a bugle, and lights were ordered out by the same signal. Every hour of the day was prescribed on the schedule : so much time for study, so much for meals, so much for recreation — a word of sinister irony in Michel's ears, since the boys were not permitted to go beyond the school limits without surveillance.

The buildings themselves were in barrack style : tall, square, uncompromisingly plain, built along two sides of a parade ; and behind

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them stretched two or three acres of rolling land, beautified by groups of clipped spruces and by a small round "pleasure-pond."

Before coming to Prince George's, Michel had taken much satisfaction in the thought of this last-named feature of the college grounds, referred to in the circular as "suitable for skating in winter and boating in summer," and now he never saw it without reëxperiencing something of the sinking of heart with which, during his first recreation hour, he had come upon this trim little pool, conspicuous and artificial, on the margin of which a pair of diminutive, flat-bottomed boats were drawn up.

Captain Fougère had decided upon Prince George's as the best school for his grandson for two chief reasons: it was not a church school; and, according to all that he could learn from the circular and by correspondence, its courses were especially strong in sci-

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ence. Furthermore, the tuition charges were not high, and the greatest effort was made — so they wrote him — “to develop stimulating personal relations between teacher and student.”

Michel had entered the third form, in which there were about twenty-five other boys, for the most part a little younger than himself. None of the others had any Acadian connections, and he found himself, for the first time in his life, slightly looked down upon. Naturally shy, this consciousness influenced him to keep more than ever to himself. He was not accustomed — did not know how — to take the initiative in friendship; and none of his fellows seemed to care to make overtures. As for the masters, they saw small promise in young Fougère's work; and having come to the conclusion that there was something a little queer about the lad, — mere offishness, no doubt; those French are

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all a little queer, you know, — they did not trouble themselves unnecessarily. He was harmless enough; amiable, too, in his way; seemed quiet and well behaved, and did not often break the regulations.

Thus by the end of the first month, Michel had pretty well found his place, — which was by himself. If his letters to the captain were short and rather perfunctory, there was another reason for it than his natural infacility of expression. He had to keep most of his real life out of them. Instinctively frank and ingenuous, — far beyond, even, the majority of boys of his age, — he found himself forced, cruelly against his will, to play a rôle. He had expected to write often to Eugénie Beauséjour; — one day, early in the summer, she had laughingly agreed to answer every question he would ask her; — but each time he made the attempt he ended by throwing down the pen in shame and despair. He was kept

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so terribly aware of what was expected of him ! Sometimes, as on the days when the home letter came, it would seem to him as if he could stand it no longer : he must speak out at once and for all ; he would tell the captain everything — that he was miserable ; that his work was not good ; that he wanted to give it up and come back home — do anything, rather than keep up this mockery.

And then he would see his grandfather, white-haired, broken by the years, still believing in the great things that were to be realized in his own flesh and blood ; still holding, with an optimism as unreasoning as it was buoyant, to the dreams of a lifetime. Michel could not bring himself to destroy those illusions. Besides, he had not really failed ; and why should he not improve as time went on ? His masters told him that what he lacked was application ; that he did not put his mind on his work. Well, that could be remedied. He

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would work harder. He would not think so much about other things. For better or worse, his course in life had been laid out for him, and he would not be a coward. If he was not happy, at least he would not whine about it. No one should know.

He wondered why he was not happy, why he did not take hold of his work better. Certainly he had tried. He wanted to succeed; had never wanted it so intensely as just now. But his mind would not seem to yield itself to the kind of discipline that was demanded of it.

The strange unsummoned thoughts that would begin flashing across his brain the instant he set himself at his lessons, teasing and distracting his attention! How his imagination would begin to strain and tug at its leash, like a wild bird frantic with its dreams of liberty, until finally, snapping the cord with a supreme effort, up she reels, — up, — dizzily, ecstatically, into the shining sky.

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There was the gusty wind in the chimney of a winter's evening, while he bent stolidly over his Elements of Physics. How it murmured and sighed and whined ! Now it was whispering. It had come from the sea, that wind, fifty miles away. It had felt the waves heave and crash under it, along beaches and among deep rock-caves. Perhaps it had crossed barrens like those of Cap au Guet.

In an instant there he was again, on the Cape, a little boy, crouching alone, on the side of a bare hill, out of sight of La Rose, imagining himself lost — égaré dans les bois. In the distance a thin strip of sea brimmed and circled against the tall, bright sky. On the edge of the marsh below a few sheep were nibbling industriously, with little crunching sounds. Yes, and there was La Rose's soft, incessant, half-singing chatter, as she entertained herself, just over the hill, at her nimble work. What a sweetness

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in the simple patois! If only he could hear it again.

La Rose! She was not forgetting him, certainly. He could have told everything to her, and she would have understood.

What was it that he really longed for? Where was the thing he would have chosen — if they had let him? — if it had been his to choose?

At night he would awake sometimes to hear the voice of it calling in his ears, just as he had heard it in his little room at home, just as his father had heard it before him — deep, incessant, menacing, irresistible, claiming its own. He must not listen. There was nothing in it for him. He had been dedicated to something higher. He belonged to a cause. How many would have given their souls for such an opportunity as had been secured — and at what a sacrifice — for him!

He thought of his father, whom he had

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never known. Perhaps he would have understood this terrible disease of his mind. Why was it that Captain Trajane never spoke of him? Had he had the same hopes of Amédée, perhaps, in the old days; and had Amédée failed, in the same way, to fulfill them? Michel seemed to feel, across the space of years, a new sense of kinship growing up in himself with his father, — only it was more the relation of brother and brother, somehow, than of son and father. He did not suppose that he should ever know anything more of Amédée than he knew now; but the thought of him, and of a possible community in their experience, was one of his greatest solaces during the hard, unreconciled months of that year.

XVII

SPRING had not yet passed beyond its first scarcely recognizable stages when an event occurred at Captain Fougère's that set all Port l'Évêque agog; nay, Scaramouche, Petit Ingrat, and St. Esprit were inquiring if the thing had verily come to pass. A prospective wife-taking on the part of Johnny McPhee was an affair of more than local importance. His destiny was the destiny of the festive life of four parishes.

What made the ball so fine? Johnny McPhee. What made all eyes to shine, all feet to dance, all hearts grow light? Johnny McPhee. Souls might get to heaven without him — that was another business; but along the dusty highways of humanity, where the load was heavy enough and there was a plenty of dull care, what like Johnny, with his

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mouth-organ or concertina and his ramshackle, infectious merriment, to start the blood of youth again?

And if Johnny McPhee must wed, as all men seem bound to do sooner or later, how important that he should take a wife from among our own people, — une bonne Acadienne, — who knows our ways, who is sprung out of our own soil! Report had it that tempting overtures had been made to Johnny from down Whicogomagh way (Scotch trash!) where they needed some one to play the pipes at funerals (funerals! sacré mon Dieu, that's what their dances are, for that matter!). Well, he would not accept after this; that was sure.

Now for Céleste: there is a good honest girl. Not handsome — non, décidément elle n'est pas tout ce qu'il y a de joli — nor young, perhaps; but honest as the broad daylight; and she will make him comfortable, will

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look after him devotedly. There could be no doubt of her understanding him well enough, for had he not been visiting her now for seven years? And it was clear that she had exerted an excellent influence on him. He had been seen less and less frequently of late years at the Bonheur-aux-Matelots, under the courthouse hill.

Yet she would not be too strict with him, — never harsh or quarrelsome. Johnny could not have stood that. He was not made for it. His nature was like the leaf of a sensitive plant which shuts up when the sun stops shining. Even a frown would put Johnny out of humor for playing.

There were those, of course — crabbed ones, like old Zacharie Beauséjour — who took a sterner view.

“Now that he’s had his twinge of sciatica,” they said, “he may well be looking out for some one to fetch and carry. He has never

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done an honest day's work yet, and comes to church just once a year, at Easter."

Whatever opinion others might hold of Céleste's match, there was no doubt of her own happiness in it. Every now and then the marvel of it all would come over her — that she, poor stupid Céleste La Vache, forty years old and as awkward as a seal on a rock, should have been chosen from among the host of her fairer sisters to be the helpmeet of Scaramouche Johnny. And it had all happened so without warning!

In a tremulous blur of memory she recalled how Johnny had entered the kitchen on that treacherous, blustering, thrice-blessed afternoon of April. It had been snowing again, and his face was blue with cold.

"Nom de Dieu!" she had exclaimed. "Weather like this, M'sieu Johnny, and you out without an overcoat! Come, sit down there behind the stove, and in five minutes

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you shall have some hot tea—or a little cognac first, hein, to make circulate the blood?”

She opened the oven door for added comfort, pulled off his boots, which had collected a quantity of snow, and put the kettle on the front of the stove.

Finally she went back to her rug, which was stretched on its frame supported by four chair-backs; and as she deftly caught up the narrow strips of bright woolen through the fabric of the canvas, she talked solicitously, chidingly, to her visitor.

“And a day like this, mon ami, to be outdoors without an overcoat! Who ever heard of such a thing! And me, who have given you some good advice all these years. T-t-t-t!”

Johnny did not say anything. He had emptied his “little glass” with one gulp and a long sigh of content; but his teeth had not yet

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stopped chattering from cold, and his long hands were stretched out shakingly into the warmth of the open oven.

“You have come all the way from Scaramouche, I am sure,” she went on, as she poured out his tea. “Not a soul in Port l’Évêque would have the carelessness to let you go out like that.”

“I forgot my coat when I was in town here once last week,” said Johnny stutteringly (he did not name the place). “It was warm and I had taken it off. But now eight days are past, and I am not out of the door once except to go to the shed where that curse of a cow waits always to be milked.”

Céleste promptly dropped her semblance of reproach. “Poor creature!” she cried, not referring to the cow. “I wondered why you had never been in all that long time. Ah, but what you must have suffered, all alone, and of a nature so sociable.”

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"I have been thinking," said Johnny significantly.

"That was dull, I am sure," commented the sympathetic Céleste. "Me, I do not care for it."

"On the contrary, I found it profitable." Johnny had never appeared so devoid of gayety as at the present moment. He was like the grasshopper who came in the shivering despair of winter to the ant's house, with numb, frost-bitten limbs. How unlike the gay, bedizened creature that had rollicked so impudently about the fields in the warm sunshine of midsummer, while Thrift laid by for pinching weather. The saltatic nerve is quickly affected by cold.

"Do not talk to me any more now, Céleste, s'il vous plaît. Wait till I have finished my tea. I have important things to think about."

There was just a gleam of reviving mirth

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in his eye, as he took a second cup from her. He sat there with his feet on the platform of the oven, his back hunched over like a brown hollyhock stalk after an autumn squall; and he took his tea in long, luxurious sips, punctuated with little moans of content.

“For tea,” he murmured, “Céleste, mon enfant, it’s only you who knows how to make it! I’ve had nothing but dish-water for a week”; and as the girl was about to protest,—“Don’t speak,” he interjected. “I beg to be left to myself for a few more minutes. I wish to think of the past and of the future.”

“Oh, m’sieu!” gasped Céleste, not in the least sensing the drift of Johnny’s prelude, yet feeling a growing uneasiness which she could not account for. Nevertheless she held her peace, for she always paid a scrupulous regard to Johnny’s caprices. He could set the stage as he liked when it depended on her.

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So five minutes, or ten, passed. Then Johnny McPhee drew a long breath and began once more : —

“ Ah, but how one is comfortable here by the fire, — and you always so near, *ma petite alouette*, diligent, amiable, contented, full of all the virtues.”

Céleste felt her cheeks growing hot as she bent over her hooking frame. She was used enough to Johnny's compliments; but to-day — there was something in his voice — her heart began to thump most disconcertingly, and a blind, unreasoning panic took hold of her, a mad impulse to run away, to shut the pantry door behind her, to find shelter somewhere, anywhere. Yet, in its way, the panic was not unpleasant. She would not have obeyed the impulse even if she could have done so. The same instinct that told her to run also told her — and more imperatively — to stay where she was; to hang there,

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flushed and trembling, over the hooked rug, in a vain show of industry, while Johnny McPhee girded up his resolution.

Yes, she knew now what was coming. Her feelings had brought the message to her sluggish intelligence. After seven long years of presurrender, of meek-eyed and fluttering expectancy, these wingy dreams were to be realized. Her ears sang.

Johnny put down his teacup and cleared his throat.

"Mademoiselle," he began, "I said I had been thinking. That is true. I began by thinking of myself. I ended by thinking of another."

"Of — another — m'sieu?" The words came from Céleste's lips in the thin, dry accents of fright.

"Oui, ma petite, of another; and that other was you. During those days of solitude, shut in to myself without other com-

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pany than my mouth-organ, first I pitied myself. Then I began to blame myself. It was so without necessity. And the idea came to me, my skylark, of how charming it would be to see you going back and forth about the house, now sweeping, now making bread, now bringing in a pail of water, — always attending to the ménage, never out of temper, never depressed — and such an excellent cook.”

A wave of tenderness swept over Céleste at this tribute, and a pair of tears fell upon the green border of the hooked rug. She did not dare look up.

“And so,” went on Johnny McPhee, rising to his feet, “I said to myself, ‘I will not wait another day. I will go to Céleste La Vache, so long adored, and will tell her that just as soon as I can save up fifty dollars — or twenty-five, perhaps, which will not be far away, now that Lent is almost over — I will marry her.’”

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Céleste stood stock still, while Johnny shuffled behind her and put his arms about her ample waist.

“Es tu contente, ma petite?” he asked, in a wheedling voice. “Does that please you?”

She turned happily in his embrace and held her red face up to him. “But yes,” she stammered; and then, after a moment, — “But what about those dreams, mon ami?”

“It’s you, my little cabbage!” he said magnanimously. “The princess, — that is your virtuous, amiable soul, which is so different from your outward appearance. I have settled all that to my satisfaction.”

He planted a smack upon her waiting lips.

“And, after all, I am an excellent cook,” supplied Céleste modestly. “Already I know your tastes. You will see how well I will do.”

So it was settled. From a resolve so well meditated and so nobly put into execution, Johnny McPhee showed no disposition to

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withdraw ; and as for Céleste — never in the same number of weeks had so many of the captain's plates been dropped incontinently on the floor, so many cups separated from their handles, so many loaves of bread scorched in the baking. Oh, it is certain that she was happy, that Céleste.

XVIII

MICHEL brought no prizes from the college; but that did not seem to affect the welcome they accorded him at Port l'Évêque. Indeed, to hear La Rose's proud babble, you would have thought he was bearing away the spoils of the whole intellectual world.

"And yet, for all that," she exclaimed, happily interrupting her own song of victory, "it is always our Michel, no matter how much of a scholar they have made him. Taller — yes — and of a dignity, but not changed in the heart."

The little triumphal procession made its way through the town, Michel ahead, with Captain Trajane; Céleste and La Rose following close after, and a flock of curious children at their heels; last of all a long two-wheeled truck, carrying the boy's small sea-chest trunk and old portmanteau.

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Eugénie and her mother had been at the wharf to greet him, but had left promptly ; for Zacharie, said Madame Beauséjour, would be impatient for his tea. Michel had noticed with a start the difference that the year had given the girl's appearance. She was in long skirts ; her figure had filled out ; her hair was done in a low, braided coil. He had felt an odd shyness of her that first moment, and as she had not offered to kiss him, he had not made bold to claim the privilege.

Instead she had extended her hand with a certain formality.

"Oh, Michel," she had said, "welcome home again. We are all so proud of you."

There was something a little chilling in the words. He had looked at her awkwardly, unable to find any suitable reply ; and into his mind flashed again the remembrance of his failure to write her, and, for the first time, an intimation of how it might be interpreted.

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"You will come and see us soon," said Eugénie, with a cordial, grown-up smile. "You will have so many interesting things to tell us."

Michel wanted to make amends, to offer some sort of an explanation. "To-morrow," he proposed eagerly. "May I come?"

She had acquiesced with a smile, and turned to accompany her mother from the wharf.

As Michel passed once more along the familiar thoroughfare, his arm grasped proudly by the old man at his side, he scarcely felt the ground under his feet. Nothing seemed quite real. Was it only ten hours ago that he had left behind him a world where no one had the least thought or care for him?

From house to house windows were flung up and heads thrust out; doors opened; there was laughter, handshaking, congratulations.

And the abundance of news! "There is a

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new pig," ejaculated Céleste; "though it is not so very fat yet, not nearly so fat as that poor Victor."

To Michel, just then, no subject seemed half so engaging as the chronicle of pigs.

"Victor is gone, then?" he inquired.

"Yes," sighed Céleste tragically. "His life was not long — only till Christmas; but I am sure it was happy. Always he had plenty to eat, and of the choicest."

"Ah, but our Céleste has greater news than that to tell of," put in La Rose. "She would not let m'sieu le capitaine write it in a letter."

Michel looked around into the broad, radiant, homely face behind him. Céleste burst out giggling and rolled her eyes desperately from side to side.

"Céleste," he demanded. "Has it happened, then?"

She gasped through a spasm of mirth. "Oui, oui, mon ami, c'est arrivé!"

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The captain joined in with mock reproach. "Céleste had no thought for any one but herself. It makes no difference to her if the rest of us perish of hunger."

"That is not true," retorted the domestic stoutly. "Johnny,—he would have married me already this very month. He is doing a good business. There is plenty of money. But do you think I would listen to him, me? Not till September, I said, after M'sieu Michel will be gone. No one but Céleste will make his doughnuts for him."

At the gate La Rose left them. She was staying with Captain Tommy Leblanc's wife just now until the new baby should arrive.

"I shall be running in and out," she said, "from one day's end to another. It is not for long we shall have our boy with us."

Céleste had a look of infinite subtlety on her face. "You will perhaps desire to rest yourselves for a few minutes here in the gar-

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den," she suggested; and Michel knew that some long-planned surprise awaited him. "I must see if there are any poor scraps left for the boy's supper." She disappeared, stifling a giggle.

Captain Trajane had seated himself somewhat wearily on the bench under the window, and was lighting his pipe with a hand that trembled more than of old. Michel took a quick look of delight about the familiar garden, where the roses were just beginning to blossom; then he sat down on the side of the front step, leaning his bare head against the door-jamb, and letting his eyes range happily out over the harbor,—where three small schooners lay at anchor in their own shadows,—and beyond that, across the Cape and the bay, into the softened distances of twilight. The captain gazed at him for a long time without speaking, brooding on every feature of his countenance.

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Though Michel had grown perceptibly older, his face still preserved the indeterminate and elusive charm of adolescence: it suggested and promised, rather than declared, like the bud that trembles to the moment of its unfurling. His soft hair curled willfully over his forehead and behind his ears; his skin had a clear, gleaming pallor upon which each shadow lent emphasis to the bony contours of the face, — the bold, slightly sloping forehead, the high cheekbones, the slender nose, the prominent but finely modeled chin. There was a faint darkening of the upper lip; but the line of the mouth was still the undefined, dreamy line of boyhood.

At last the old man broke the silence.

“You are happy, Michel?”

The boy turned to him with a look that shone. “Yes, sir,” he answered. “I am almost too happy. I don’t know what to say.”

“I think they are making a man of you at

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the college," said Captain Trajane. "You have had a good year there?"

"Yes, sir," Michel answered him, with no apparent hesitation,—"a very good year."

"You have enjoyed good health?"

"Excellent, grandfather."

"They have made you comfortable?"

"Yes, sir, quite comfortable," said the boy. He did not stop there, for he was afraid of the questions that might come. "The college grounds are large and attractive, and the buildings are well kept. They give you good food there, too, though I must confess the cooking is not like Céleste's. One must travel a long way to find her equal."

The captain was not to be diverted so easily

"You have made congenial friends, I hope," he pursued, "though you have not often mentioned them in your letters."

The boy winced, almost imperceptibly. "I do not think I am so quick as some about

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that," he said, without looking at his grandfather.

"You should make more of an effort," he counseled. "Take my word for it, Michel, there is nothing to be valued more highly than a true friend. Do you remember what the *Sieur de Montaigne* says of friendship? or *Lord Bacon*, the founder of modern science? No, no, Michel, a man who undertakes to live without friends is making a terrible error. I cannot believe that it is possible to be permanently happy so, however it may seem for a year."

Michel did not speak. He felt a queer ache in his throat as he thought of all those dreary months so close behind him. "Permanently happy so!" As if he had chosen to be friendless! A fierce impulse seized him to have out the whole bitter truth at once, now, before any more barriers should be raised in the way of it. When he had made a miserable failure

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of the year, how could he go on letting them all believe he had succeeded?

He dug the heel of his shoe into the gravel path and clutched his hands over his knees. But with the utterance of the first word he felt within himself that same old sense of panic, of helplessness, that had always made him tongue-tied when, as a small boy, he had attempted to set himself against his grandfather's will.

"Grandfather," he began, "I have not told you everything in my letters."

The captain interrupted him brusquely. "I did not intend to imply any criticism of your letters, Michel. I think they have been excellent: careful, straightforward, informing. We have thoroughly enjoyed them."

In the gathering darkness he could not see that the blood had fled from the boy's lips, and that his legs were trembling as if with a chill.

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"But grandfather," he cried, in a strained, high-pitched voice, "it is so hard to put some important things in letters. All the year I have wanted to tell you, but I could n't seem to write them on paper. You see —"

The old man cut him off again, half-rebukingly, and as if deliberately to forestall the declaration that trembled on the boy's lips. "No one could expect you to do more than you have done, grandson. Do not accuse yourself of imaginary faults. There will be plenty of chances to fill in all the gaps during these weeks of vacation. You told me what you knew I was most interested to hear about: your studies, your progress. We all glory in what you have accomplished. For myself, indeed, I might say that I have actually been living my own life in yours during these months. You are bringing to pass all the aspirations that never had a chance of fulfillment in myself."

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Michel shut his lips tight over a sob. He felt beaten, — as helpless as a captive animal that has flung itself frenziedly against the bars of its cage until, from sheer exhaustion, it relinquishes the vain attempt of freedom.

XIX

AT the Beauséjours', the next afternoon, Michel found Eugénie at work on a chain of artificial flowers — daisies and forget-me-nots interspersed with leaves of vividest green — which was intended for the decoration of the oratory in the corner of the room. A smiling Virgin of alabaster stood there, on a little pedestal of shellwork: behind spread two broad pink coral fans, and overhead, on an embroidered scroll, were the words, "Ora pro Nobis."

She held out the floral chain for his inspection. "Do you think it's pretty?" she asked lightly.

Michel fingered it with crude admiration. "It's wonderful. Did you make it all yourself?"

"You silly child!" she laughed. "Of course

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not. But the leaves are mine. Sister Sainte Geneviève taught me."

"I don't see how you did them," he exclaimed.

"Well, they were a little discouraging at first. You would not think how much time it has taken! But then," she added, "you see, if I cannot be growing wise like you, at least I must be industrious."

She looked at him primly.

"I do not think I have grown much wiser," returned Michel, shifting his feet a little nervously. "I feel as ignorant as ever."

She opened her eyes wide. "Ignorant," she echoed, with a lift in her voice. "Only think of me, then, who have scarcely learned beyond my catechism. Oh, you will find us dull, I am sure."

"Please don't talk that way," he protested, with a forced, disquieting laugh. "I like it here so much better than at the college." He

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had come that afternoon with the intention of telling Eugénie the whole story.

She raised a quick look to him; then bent over her work again. "You must not flatter us like that," she said. "We simple folks believe too easily,—though I can well imagine it would surprise you to know what some of your friends have reported of Prince George's. You should only hear La Rose once! The buildings are of the most magnificent—like palaces, every one. The grounds are of an indescribable beauty," — Eugénie rolled her eyes, — "and the young men are all of the most aristocratic. That is the life you come out of.— Ah, we may well be a little afraid of you."

She applied herself steadfastly to the attaching of a leaf. Michel felt a kind of embarrassment. He could not quite understand what Eugénie was getting at, — how far she was merely joking. He seemed to detect a hint of bitterness in her tone.

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On an abrupt impulse he demanded, "Why do you talk to me like that?"

She flashed a glance of inquiry at him from under her fluttering lashes; then dropped her eyes to her work without speaking, her lips a little set, and a slow flush creeping over her cheeks.

"How do you want me to talk?" she asked at last, in a detached voice, bending to bite off a thread. "I will do the best I can. I must try to please you."

Her answer stung him as much as it puzzled him. This was not any Eugénie he had known.

He broke out, "Oh, Eugénie, why can't we have it again like the old days, — before I ever had to go away? Why does that have to make any difference? Let's just act as if it had n't happened at all!"

The girl hesitated, and then answered, in the same tone as before, "But that's impos-

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sible, Michel. You've changed so much, don't you see?"

The boy stared at her as she put her needle carefully through a stem of forget-me-nots. "Do you think that?" he asked, in astonishment. "I thought it was you who had changed."

She had a pensive smile. "Perhaps it happened a little to both of us," she said oddly. "I suppose we had to grow up. We can't go back and be children again now."

Michel felt suddenly cut off from his hopes. "Couldn't we even pretend?" he pleaded.

She shook her head. "What would be the use? It's much better to get accustomed to the difference. When you're grown up, you're grown up." She smiled faintly.

"But I never wanted to go away to college," ejaculated the boy fiercely. "I wasn't made for that. I can't succeed there. I have done miserably."

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He had spoken it out at last; and he was not sorry!

She looked up at him in a grave wonder, which changed the next instant to sympathy, as she saw how excited and unstrung he was.

"Dear Michel," she said, "you are tired. You have been overworking. We all know how splendidly you have done. Captain Trajane has told mother all about it. Even father is almost persuaded at last, and that is saying a good deal. You must not let yourself get discouraged."

Michel did not answer her. There was an instant of silence, while she appeared to be studying the effect of a bunch of daisies against an emerald-green leaf.

"Of course, we knew all the time," she resumed gently, "that you would do well. How often have I heard my mother say, 'If it depends at all on his friends, Michel Fougère will certainly make a name for him-

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self.' Though she never could feel quite happy that you had not gone to a religious college."

Still Michel did not speak. Eugénie seemed to be summoning up her resolution. When the next words came they were so low and rapid as to be scarcely audible.

"In that I agreed with her. I do not like to see one outside the church. I wish you were more interested, Michel, in such things. It is so beautiful—our religion. It gives so much comfort, to know that the gentle Virgin is there, always, watching over her children."

She lifted her eyes to his again, and looked at him for an instant in complete simplicity and unconsciousness. Michel got suddenly to his feet and went to the window, where he stood staring out, blindly, across the harbor, holding his legs rigidly together to keep them from trembling.

"I know you do not like to have me talk

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this way," she went on; "but — you see — I made a little vow to St. Anthony, who is the patron of scholars, that I would do it some time, and why should I not take the first moment, while I have the courage? If you could only understand, dear Michel, how it gives one strength to go to the feet of the blessed Mother, who knows all our hearts so well, the good and the bad. One can tell her everything, — the mistakes, all the little confidences of every day. She knows so well what suffering is; and that is why no one was ever turned away who went to her for consolation."

Michel felt an agonized tightening in his throat as she went on. It was as if he saw her suddenly living in another world; it was the same feeling he had had on that day of the Corpus Christi procession, only then she had not looked at him: to-day she was pleading with him to enter the door of faith.

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“Michel, don't you see?” Her voice came to him from afar.

Something inside him had grown bitter and obdurate and resentful. He did not look at her as he exclaimed brutally: —

“I don't see what you should need of consolation — you! Is n't *your* life happy enough?”

In the strange silence that followed he seemed to hear the words echoing harshly. He went on staring out of the window, seeing nothing. The silence grew intolerable. He turned his head quickly, and saw her gazing at him through tears. The floral chain had slipped from her lap and lay on the floor. Instantly, as he turned, she rose to her feet and darted for the door on the other side of the room, not speaking a word.

“Eugénie,” he called.

She dashed her handkerchief across her eyes and faced him defiantly.

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"Oh, Michel!" she said. "I did n't think it of you. — You would n't have spoken like that a year ago!"

The boy was humble enough. "I did n't mean it," he pleaded. "Only — it all seems so — so — I don't know how to say it."

"Why don't you say childish?" she demanded bitterly. "No doubt it looks that way to you, coming back here from all your success at the college. Oh, I don't wonder you never thought it was worth while to write any letters to your old friends who stayed home and made little chains of flowers."

Michel's anger blazed up uncontrollably. "I tried to explain," he cried, "and you would n't believe me. If you want to have me try again, you can sit down now and listen."

"Some things are better not explained," she retorted, with an accusing, inscrutable

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look, as she opened the stair-door quickly and left him.

He caught up his cap from the table and strode out of the house.

XX

MICHEL had never felt such a misery of resentment and futile rebellion as that afternoon on his walk homeward. The happiness he had looked forward to during all those hideous months at Prince George's, the one thing that had made that life at all bearable—well, here it was! He was enjoying it now to the full! To be confronted on every hand by this cruel irony of misunderstanding. "His success! His attainments!"—he would keep hearing that all summer long—"the credit that he was to Port l'Évêque!" And now his old playmate had turned out to be in the same conspiracy. He had meant to tell her everything; and she refused to listen. He felt utterly baffled by her conduct, those sudden alterations of mood that were so unlike her old self. First she must be congratulating him,

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like the others ; then cajoling him ; then pleading with him ; accusing him ; finally quitting him with a stinging innuendo that hurt deeper than anything else. And during all those months of absence he had dreamed of the delight it would be to renew that old dear intimacy,—which had gone now, it seemed, beyond recall forever.

The street was almost deserted. Michel was glad of it. For the moment, at all events, he would not have to respond to any more of their well-meant congratulations, nor be urged to give an account of his magnificent life at the college. He could not have stood another word just now. He was tired of these people who were bullying him with their terrible good-will.

His feeling of personal ill-treatment was growing fast. He walked along with his eyes bent on the ground, occasionally giving a sullen kick to some loose stone, passing by the

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open shop-doors and the wharf-ways without so much as a glance.

Well, if it was stories they wanted, they could have them. He would only have to look back a year ; he had made up enough then on his own account, of the kind they wanted, — back in those blessed, ignorant days before he had guessed the farce he was going to make of the whole business. He was filled with an aching rage against all the world that had shoved him so implacably out of his birthright.

But as he reached Captain Tommy's at the foot of the hill, a door opened with a quick movement, and there was La Rose, beckoning him in. A curt refusal came to his lips ; but he did not utter it, for he saw in an instant that she was not looking for gossip. Stifling his sullenness for the moment, he followed her into the stuffy little parlor, half lighted through drawn shades of green

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marriage instead of to marry for the heart. Yes, it was scarcely even if your grandfather could secure the little Michel for himself, and then only because they thought perhaps it would save them the expenses of another funeral.

“But as for the letters, Mathilde often had them in her hand during those last weeks. She would read them,—read them,—as if the eyes would start out of her head. ‘Mathilde, my child,’ I would say, ‘you will do yourself a harm by that. You had better put them away.’ But she: ‘Oh, La Rose, you cannot understand,’—always speaking in that strange sweet voice of hers, as clear as poor Gabrielle’s before ever she fell out of the church steeple.—‘No,’ she would say, ‘it is my Amédée in these letters—more of him than I have anywhere else,—except,’ she said, ‘for what has not happened yet’; and always when she mentioned the little one that was beginning to

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make itself waited for now, she would have a tear on her white cheek like a pearl.

“So there they were, those letters, under her pillow every night, along with her little rosary; and after everything was over, do you think I could let all those parents of hers put their hands to them? No, nor the old Captain Trajane either, who had been harsh to her on Amédée's account, whom he could never forgive, — not even after he had come back again that time in repentance. They were both of them so proud — like horses — those two, the captain and Amédée; and the poor Mathilde, that white lily who was too gentle for this earth, she did not often get the courage even to make a visit on that Captain Trajane. ‘I am afraid of him, La Rose,’ she said. ‘We can have nothing between us, me and him.’

“So I would not give the letters to Captain Trajane; and so I must keep them myself, always with me somewhere, now in one

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place, now another, as the case might be; and I told myself that sometime, when Michel would be grown to a man, I would give them to him, because they would be a token to him of his mother, whom he had never seen in this world.

“And so,” she finished, “there they are, and the little rosary, too, which I have kept all this time, and which that beautiful soul of a Mathilde often soaked with her tears. Voici, mon homme, now they are for you. You will care for them well, n'est-ce pas? They are some precious relics of a saint.”

She put them with a quick, gentle movement in his hands. For almost nineteen years she had looked forward to this moment; it was a summing up of all her devotion to the boy and to the past. This had been her secret, kept inviolate, unsuspected even by those who knew her best.

Michel understood what she had done for

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him. The tears glistened in his eyes as he closed his fingers over her gifts, and with an instinctive impulse of tenderness and reverence he raised them to his burning lips.

"The string has not been undone," murmured La Rose, "since the day she died. It is for you to do that, if you wish; you will decide. Now they are yours."

He perceived that she was ready to have him take his departure. He put the small parcel into an inside pocket. Then he held out the rosary to the old woman.

"This is yours, La Rose," he said. "My mother would have wished it so, I am sure. And—and La Rose, she would have thanked you for all this."

Before she could answer, he had left the room and passed out upon the street. She pulled up the shade a little and watched him as he flung himself over the gate of the steep field opposite and took the path that led,

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through the tall grass, straight up the hill toward the barrens. Then she gazed with loving intentness at the little rosary with its carved ebony beads, and pressed her thin lips upon the tarnished crucifix.

"Perhaps it will be hard for the poor boy," she murmured. "If I only knew how I could help him, for I am sure he is not happy."

In the corner of the room was a little oratory, containing a lithograph print of the Sacred Heart of Mary, and a pair of tall wax tapers; and in front of it was a worn prie-dieu. There was always one way to help those in trouble! And La Rose had practiced it all her life. . . .

XXI

Two hours later the sun was just sinking out of sight, in a blaze of orange and crimson, behind the low, distant-seeming skyline of the barrens; but Michel sat there still, on the hidden shelf of rock which, from boyhood, had been his favorite retreat. The letters lay beside him. He had read them, and read them again; read them he knew not how many times; it seemed to him as if he had always known the contents.

There were only four; two that bore the postmark of New York, two of Rio de Janeiro. The edges were broken and yellowed, and, across the two envelopes that had been outermost, the binding of string had left its shadowy, unfaded imprint. How far into the mystery of the past they had taken him! — yet in a certain sense it was not into the past at all, but only

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into the quivering, secret heart of the present moment. Across the mute years he had, for the first time, touched the hand of one to whom his own failures and hesitations and unspeakable desires were already known, utterly intelligible. Michel, indeed, felt a kind of humiliation before the terrible intensity of Amédée's struggle; the antagonisms in his own nature dwindled to thin phantoms beside these sinister, relentless enemies to which Amédée had given battle.

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ing, oblivious of time and fatigue, and whose eyes still burned with the fierceness of his own defeat, this very incoherence, this futile violence after a something that persistently eluded seizure, had spoken more clearly and thrillingly than any other words he had ever met.

“It is thinking of you, dearest, that gives me some strength against all these frightful things inside. Sometimes they are like fire, flaming, kind of, and I go back to the Sept Étoiles and lie down up there in the bow and look up aloft and try to remember that you are thinking about me, and then I feel a little safer. But sometimes I hear things, say like music, in the city, and I can't seem to remember then — and I don't know what might happen. But I am trying hard — only I wish we did not have to wait in New York any longer for the cargo. . . . To be on the sea again! — I do not live anywhere else. I have never been

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anything but glad I broke off that other thing before it was too late. What was the use to fight against stars? Poor father, he can never understand that. — I am a coward, he thinks. But I could not seem to breathe in that air of the school, shut up so. But on the ocean — it is like doors, opening always out and out — that is the feeling — always beyond there. It frightens you, Mathilde, and so it does me, too, in one way; but I love it — more than anything else but you.” . . .

Michel opened the next letter and read on. It was dated ten days later; the full cargo had not been ready. But in a few hours now they would be off: —

“Afterwards,” he wrote, — and Michel knew what had happened, — “I always think I could of helped it if I had only tried harder. But in a way, Mathilde, I know I did try —

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only not hard enough, I suppose. I could not think — it was as if I did not really know what was happening — like a kind of a dream. I had spent five nights on the vessel by myself, and I think it would have gone all right if we had not had to wait all that time for the cargo. Dearest — dearest, don't forgive me — I don't want to be forgiven — but only to be let come back to you again, like the best part of me that I have forgotten — one minute — and I knew it was there always if I could of remembered it — but in the cities I cannot understand things. It is only on the ocean, where I will be again tomorrow. There was a poem my father taught me once about sailors leaving home, and every verse ended *Adieu, Patrie: Azur!* That's how I feel when we are just ready to sail. Azur — I can't say exactly — only it seems to lift you up like that. . . . You will not hear from me again for a long time — I think I love you now more than before I told you all these things —

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Chère adorée — I am going to try again. When I left I did not say good-by, because I think always you are going with me. And now it is Azur again !” . . .

Michel stared out across the barrens, hanging like a dream in the radiance of the sunset. Over to eastward he could see the dip in the hills under which lay hidden the little settlement of Barrassois, where she had waited, prayed, trusted, month after month; — and still beyond, he caught a pale, tremulous reach of sea, thrust out, as it were, from the bare hills, a narrow, climbing highway into the eternal sky.

The next letter was dated ten weeks later. The voyage to Rio had been rough, but without any special incident.

“I like a voyage like that — always something to do. It makes you feel so terribly alive.

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If my father had kept me ashore, it would have been to take away all of me that's worth anything. . . . Dear Mathilde, I am trying so hard to keep good this time. I do not dare go ashore except if I must on some business — I was wishing a letter from you had been waiting here.—It would help me to carry it there with your little picture in my pocket. A steamer from Halifax has just come in; perhaps your letters will be on her. I will not mail this till to-morrow, and if they come I will tell you. Chère ange, you are all I have. You must not forget me or stop loving me, whatever happens — because in my heart it burns always the same — like the lamp they have in front of the altar in churches. I kiss you a thousand thousand times across the ocean." . . .

There was no postscript.

Michel drew the last letter from its faded

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envelope and held it for a long time half open in his hands before he read a word. The folds in it, worn almost through, and the blurred writing told still another story than the one written down. The date was two weeks later than the preceding; an intervening letter, it seemed, must have been lost. Michel wondered whether his mother's tears had ever fallen on that one, too.

“Chère adorée,” it began: “It does not seem to-day as if I could be the same man as wrote you that black letter last week. I think a hundred devils were tearing me to pieces then. I did not feel as if I could ever make another try after what had just happened. But the very next day those letters came from you, with all that wonderful news! Only to think of it, Mathilde. We had almost begun to wonder if there would be any — and then, all of a sudden, here it is on the

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way. To-morrow they say we are done with this dreadful city — and then direct to Halifax, the last voyage ; and then, home. Chère Mathilde, how long it has seemed, this waiting and doing nothing, — thinking of what is going to happen ! If it is a boy, Mathilde, will he be like me, do you think, always crazy about the ocean, or perhaps will he have good brains for work over books ? I hope, anyway, he will be a strong and brave man, and able to keep good. I have got to feeling as if there was a chance for me, now. I am sure of it — it makes such a difference — you know what I mean. And in a few months now it will come — it will be in our arms, making us laugh, Mathilde. Something tells me the voyage will be good. The ocean never looked so friendly, — calling that Azur, Azur, all the time. I tell myself it understands, and it promises to take me quickly to the dear little maman. Does n't that sound pretty ?

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Over all these miles of ocean I take you in my arms, chérie.

“Your husband, who adores you always,
“AMÉDÉE.”

And at the bottom, added later and underlined, the eager words:—

“Think of it! In such a little while—home again—to you!”

The sunset was beginning to fade over the barrens. The crimson west had thrown out long quivering fingers of light to join in radiant circlets over the dreaming pathway of the sea: but now these were separating and melting away; and a strange blue vault, half curtained by dim streamers of cloud, stood over that boundless avenue down which Amédée had so confidently taken his course homeward.

Michel had never felt as at that moment the moving through all the world of those

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profound, inexorable forces on the current of which some petty human life is for a moment fretted and teased about, only to be cast, one day, on an unkind shore, where the waves break it. Amédée's enemies, within and without, how implacable they had been! How courageously, with what ardent renewal of resolution, he had kept up the unequal combat with them: and finally, just as the balance seemed to have shifted in his favor, and a new future of self-respect and dignity was opening before him, the treacherous Deep had heaved up its crest, and the Sept Étoiles went out of sight forever. . . .

Yet the struggle had been worth while! Michel found himself exulting in his father, not pitying him. Amédée's life could never be called a failure when he had struggled like that—no matter how much of a failure it might appear.

And suddenly, at that moment, in the pre-

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sence of Amédée's terrible sincerity, Michel seemed to see himself standing accused. His own reticence and submission took on the look of cowardice. Only a little while ago he had been commiserating himself for being misunderstood, for being forced to play a rôle that did not belong to him. Now he despised himself; was overcome with shame. The reason for his yielding was that it had been easier to yield than to resist — that was all; he had lied because he was too weak to tell the truth. What would Amédée — his elder brother — his father — have thought of him? Amédée had had the courage to speak out. They had tried to make a scholar out of him, too. It was the same old trick. This time they thought they would succeed; but he would show them whose son he was.

Michel felt surging up within him an exultant, terrible power that would carry him to the issue without flinching. There was no

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need of his being diverted again. The end of the farce was coming now. There was still a chance to be himself. At last he possessed not only the inborn right for that, but the strength also, by which he could claim it.

He tied up the letters with feverish tenderness and put them again into his breast pocket. He took another long look at the darkening reach of ocean beyond the Barrassois hills, — the ocean that had been calling “Azur” to him so long without his having had the courage to listen, — got to his feet, and started for home.

XXII

AFTER supper La Rose ran in at Captain Fougère's. To her surprise she found the table still set. It was an hour beyond meal-time ; but Michel had not appeared.

“And me here, who had promised to make his favorite pancakes for him,” flared Céleste, with well-simulated wrath. “Mon Dieu, what are we coming to, with the way these young ones take things into their own hands nowadays !”

“I dare say he is still at Eugénie's,” said the captain, who was smoking his pipe in the open door. “We need not be too hard on him the second night, even if he forgets his pancakes — hein, La Rose ?”

“But this time you have guessed wrong,” answered La Rose, “for about the middle of the afternoon I myself saw the boy going in

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the direction of the woods. That is the place where Michel forgets himself. Indeed," she added, with more excitement in her voice than the occasion seemed to warrant, "I do not suppose he will think of returning until midnight unless some one goes out to remind him of Céleste's pancakes, which he adores. Well, the idea comes into my head of running up the hill a little way; perhaps I shall see him somewhere."

"La Rose, you are always like that," scolded Céleste, righteously indignant, — "bound to spoil that scapegrace if you can. As for me, I do not approve of such things. He will be lucky if he finds any supper waiting for him when he returns."

So saying, she carefully set by the bowl of batter on the shelf, and picked up her knitting.

La Rose went up through the unfenced pasture-land across the road, and soon reached the crest of the hill. A little distance off she

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espied Michel coming toward her, and waited. She saw that something had happened. There was a rigid set to his shoulders that was unmistakable even in the twilight; his arms looked stiff, as if his fists were clenched; and in his gait there was a savage recklessness that gave her a start of fear. He was close upon her before he seemed to become aware of her presence there.

“Hé — c’est vous, La Rose!” he exclaimed bewilderedly. “Qu’est-ce donc?”

He looked at her with eyes that burned like white flame in a haggard face.

“Ah, poor little lamb!” cried La Rose, whose quick sympathies outstripped her comprehension of his trouble. She caught one of his icy hands in both of hers and held it hard, while she turned a face of affectionate inquiry up to him. “Tell me what it is. — You must not go home like that: you look as if you had seen the *feu follet* in the woods.”

XXI

Two hours later the sun was just sinking out of sight, in a blaze of orange and crimson, behind the low, distant-seeming skyline of the barrens; but Michel sat there still, on the hidden shelf of rock which, from boyhood, had been his favorite retreat. The letters lay beside him. He had read them, and read them again; read them he knew not how many times; it seemed to him as if he had always known the contents.

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AMÉDÉE'S SON

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And suddenly, at that moment, in the pre-

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sence of Amédée's terrible sincerity, Michel seemed to see himself standing accused. His own reticence and submission took on the look of cowardice. Only a little while ago he had been commiserating himself for being misunderstood, for being forced to play a rôle that did not belong to him. Now he despised himself; was overcome with shame. The reason for his yielding was that it had been easier to yield than to resist — that was all; he had lied because he was too weak to tell the truth. What would Amédée — his elder brother — his father — have thought of him? Amédée had had the courage to speak out. They had tried to make a scholar out of him, too. It was the same old trick. This time they thought they would succeed; but he would show them whose son he was.

Michel felt surging up within him an exultant, terrible power that would carry him to the issue without flinching. There was no

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need of his being diverted again. The end of the farce was coming now. There was still a chance to be himself. At last he possessed not only the inborn right for that, but the strength also, by which he could claim it.

He tied up the letters with feverish tenderness and put them again into his breast pocket. He took another long look at the darkening reach of ocean beyond the Barrassois hills, — the ocean that had been calling “Azur” to him so long without his having had the courage to listen, — got to his feet, and started for home.

XXII

AFTER supper La Rose ran in at Captain Fougère's. To her surprise she found the table still set. It was an hour beyond meal-time; but Michel had not appeared.

"And me here, who had promised to make his favorite pancakes for him," flared Céleste, with well-simulated wrath. "Mon Dieu, what are we coming to, with the way these young ones take things into their own hands nowadays!"

"I dare say he is still at Eugénie's," said the captain, who was smoking his pipe in the open door. "We need not be too hard on him the second night, even if he forgets his pancakes — hein, La Rose?"

"But this time you have guessed wrong," answered La Rose, "for about the middle of the afternoon I myself saw the boy going in

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the direction of the woods. That is the place where Michel forgets himself. Indeed," she added, with more excitement in her voice than the occasion seemed to warrant, "I do not suppose he will think of returning until midnight unless some one goes out to remind him of Céleste's pancakes, which he adores. Well, the idea comes into my head of running up the hill a little way; perhaps I shall see him somewhere."

"La Rose, you are always like that," scolded Céleste, righteously indignant, — "bound to spoil that scapegrace if you can. As for me, I do not approve of such things. He will be lucky if he finds any supper waiting for him when he returns."

So saying, she carefully set by the bowl of batter on the shelf, and picked up her knitting.

La Rose went up through the unfenced pasture-land across the road, and soon reached the crest of the hill. A little distance off she

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espied Michel coming toward her, and waited. She saw that something had happened. There was a rigid set to his shoulders that was unmistakable even in the twilight; his arms looked stiff, as if his fists were clenched; and in his gait there was a savage recklessness that gave her a start of fear. He was close upon her before he seemed to become aware of her presence there.

“Hé — c’est vous, La Rose!” he exclaimed bewilderedly. “Qu’est-ce donc?”

He looked at her with eyes that burned like white flame in a haggard face.

“Ah, poor little lamb!” cried La Rose, whose quick sympathies outstripped her comprehension of his trouble. She caught one of his icy hands in both of hers and held it hard, while she turned a face of affectionate inquiry up to him. “Tell me what it is. — You must not go home like that: you look as if you had seen the *feu follet* in the woods.”

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She drew him round in the direction from which he had come, and putting one arm lightly through his, led him a little way down the hill to a large flat rock where they could sit. Michel had the air of somewhat resenting her interference, but he made no open objection.

They sat there for as much as a minute in perfect silence, while the barrens swiftly wrapped themselves in darkness.

"Are n't you going to tell tante La Rose?" she asked again, in a voice of gentle coaxing.

He stiffened perceptibly. "There is n't anything to tell," he retorted, between clenched teeth.

She withdrew her arm with an instinctive quickness that might have let him see how much he had hurt her, if he had been in a mood to notice such things.

"Ah, — Michel!" she exclaimed.

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"What's the matter?" he demanded brutally.

After a moment she answered him. "I suppose now that you are so learned, we are too simple and old-fashioned for you. We are of no account in your life any more."

Suddenly the set hardness in the boy's face relaxed; his shoulders drew together sharply, and a sob of anguish broke from him. He buried his face on his knees, and his whole body trembled with a violence of emotion she had never witnessed in him before.

For a while she did not say anything; but at last, putting one hand on his shoulder with the light pressure of a bird, she resumed the old tone of coaxing tenderness.

"Can't you tell poor silly old La Rose about it? Don't you think you could trust her?"

He looked at her hesitatingly out of his wet, hot eyes; then:—

"This is it!" he said. "I am going to tell

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them the truth ! I have made up my mind. I do not care whether you blame me for it or not."

"Blame you — ah, what idea have you there, mon homme ! First I would have both my two eyes put out with a red-hot spit."

He looked unflinchingly through the gloom into her anxious countenance.

"La Rose," he began, with a forced quiet that did not, however, keep the agonized bitterness out of his voice. "It has all been a frightful mistake from the beginning. I did not want to go away to the college — never. I was not made for that. I am not good at studies. I do not want to be a scholar. Every day that I am shut up there at the college I am miserable ; I can't seem to breathe there. But I have let them all believe something else. I have been a coward, — afraid to speak out the truth."

His voice grew strident. — "But that is not

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going to be so any longer. To-night I am going to tell grandfather everything, — everything, La Rose, — do you understand? There is not going to be any more lying about it. He is going to know everything.”

When he paused — “Was it the letters?” she asked quietly.

“I never knew about Amédée before,” he answered. “No one would tell me about him. He had courage, my father. He was not afraid to speak out the truth, even when it hurt him; and he was not going to let them make him into something he did not want to be. He was not a coward.”

“He broke his father’s heart,” said La Rose, in the same quiet voice as before. “Captain Trajane, he was never the same after Amédée ran away from school. It was as if they had disgraced him. He would sooner have had his son be dead than to run away.”

Michel winced, but yielded nothing. “We

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cannot always be thinking about the others," he ejaculated fiercely. "What about ourselves? Is it always to be lies for the sake of somebody else?"

He jumped to his feet, quivering with defiance. Against the dully gleaming horizon he looked tremendously tall, almost gigantic, to the little woman who remained seated, below him, overwhelmed by the responsibility she saw herself so unexpectedly facing.

"It is my life that I must live!" exclaimed Michel in a shrill, passionate voice. "I will not pretend any longer. It is not my business if he is disappointed. He will not mind so much when once he has found out that I will not go back."

When she saw that he had finished, she said timidly, "Your grandfather is an old man, Michel."

"I thought you would say that," he retorted cuttingly, with head thrown back.

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"You think he ought to know more than I about what is good for me."

"No — no — Michel," she pleaded. "I was not going to say that. He does not understand anybody but himself, the old captain. But I had the idea to ask," — she hesitated, — "does he look quite well and strong to you, Michel?"

The boy's voice evinced its first hint of softness. "No," he answered simply. "He has grown feeble this year."

"Did he write you about those bad turns he had last winter?" asked La Rose gently.

"No, I did not hear anything of that."

Her voice took a sepulchral accent that sent a shudder through him. "Michel, he has one foot in his coffin."

She did not follow up that remark too closely; she knew that his imagination would take the leading of it. The boy stood before her looking on the ground, and through the

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darkness she saw his lips pressed together into a sharp, straining line.

“There is nothing for me to say,” she went on, in a thin, diffident voice. “I am an old woman. I do not know anything; I cannot even read a Pater Noster out of a Mass-book, But I have seen a good deal of the world, mon Michel, living now here, now there, because I never had any home of my own, but always must go where they would have me. And here is what I have found out: —that always when you do something because of loving somebody, you never feel sorry afterwards, no, not even if they do not seem to be very grateful.” . . .

She hesitated, seeking light.

“And that is what happened to poor Louise Bergère, over on the Cape years ago, as every one knows; for she had all her hair cut off in secret and sold in Halifax in order to buy a new dress of satin to be married in, because

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her man had got the idea that he must have a magnificent wedding, which was absurd for a fisherman — and poor as a wharf-rat, too. But he, when he saw her with her head in a little white cap, he lost his love for her on the spot and went away to sea. But was she sorry she had done that thing for him? No, indeed. For in two or three years it had grown again, her hair, more beautiful than ever before; and when that César finally came back, — why, would you believe it? — he loved her as much as ever; and so they were married, — and she in the satin dress, after all.

“Yes, that is how things go in this world. You are only a boy, Michel. You can well afford to wait a few years more. And do you think you will be sorry you tried to make happy an old man who loves you better than anything else in all the world? I am not saying anything about poor Amédée. That was different in some ways. The captain was not

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old then ; and he was more harsh and violent. Doubtless it would have been too long to wait. . . . But when the heart of a man has been broken once, it is not a small thing if you do it a second time."

Two tears glimmered in her eyes, and her voice trembled. "We are not any cowards, Michel, when we are kind, and remember the poor aged ones who will so soon have the earth falling — clump — over their heads in the grave."

She came up to the boy timidly, and once more put her hand on his arm, gently indicating that he was to lead the way back over the hill. Neither of them spoke again until they reached the crest of the ridge and looked down upon Port l'Évêque, where here and there the lights were already shining from small windows.

"They will think we have gone astray in the woods," she murmured, almost gayly.

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Michel did not answer her; but she did not expect that.

"Céleste La Vache will be furiously enraged," she announced playfully. "Listen; I shall go in there myself and entreat for the life of that scapegrace of a Michel, who would not come home to his supper."

They reached the gate. "Ah, mon cher petit," she murmured, with a last quick pressure of his hand, "how glad they are, the old ones, to have you at home again!"

XXIII

IN September Michel returned to Prince George's, resolved to apply himself to his studies more assiduously than ever before. Some day—he did not ask how far away or how soon—the liberty he had so fiercely craved would be his. For the present he could willingly forego it. And he knew that, in a certain sense, he was not foregoing it at all, but had already achieved it, and in a more precious form than he had dreamed of.

He found himself wondering sometimes how he could ever have made that terrible resolve, which, but for La Rose's loving intervention, he would have put into immediate execution. At the first moment of his homecoming he had attained only the most rudimentary apprehension of the place held by this one hope in the captain's life. Every day

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since had brought him clearer knowledge. Yet the thought never occurred to him that, possibly, into the old man's heart there might have come some vague, unacknowledged intimation of his wavering allegiance to the career of scientist, and that in this fact might lie—to some extent, at least—the explanation of that new wistful, pathetic eagerness of his to believe—to be assured by his eyes and ears—to gather up and brood upon every favorable word of his grandson's.

However the captain's attitude might be interpreted, Michel, after that first crucial afternoon on the barrens, had guarded himself religiously from any word of discontent. La Rose was right. There was plenty of time yet. A few more years of studying could not do him any harm, once he had the assurance that the future was not setting an inextricable net for him. This year Navigation was to be one of the subjects in his schedule; he was

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sure that the problems there would be interesting. And at worst, the second year could not be so bad as the first, for he was not entertaining any illusions about it; he knew what was in store for him; and he went back to it, if not cheerfully, at least without rebellion.

Besides, he had accumulated a wonderful store of new memories during that summer, and these did him good stead when the moments of discouragement came, as they were bound to come, now and then. How often during the long autumn nights, when the rainy wind whined about the flue, was he making again that glorious voyage with Captain Tommy down to St. Pierre, Miquelon. It had taken two weeks. Every moment remained, in the memory of Amédée's son, a keen delight: the passage through the lovely Straits of Canso, where the Olympe, under full sail, barely made headway against the tide that

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rushed up out of the Northumberland Sound; the stormy crossing of the St. Lawrence Gulf, where he had made the watch and handled the ropes along with the crew, and, for the latter part of the gale, stood at the wheel himself with Captain Tommy. Then those stirring days at the odd little city on the rock, whose tiny harbor could not begin to contain the countless fishing craft that flocked there from the old country—"de là-bas," as they said;—the sailors, in baggy blue blouses, that lounged about the wharves talking the queer dialect of Brittany; and those red-checked, black-eyed girls, in a certain street he had passed through, who had smiled at him in a way that had made his heart beat fast, and had started in him a vague, tantalizing inquietude that was new and strangely alluring and that did not leave him. He sometimes saw them again, now, at night, and he did not turn his back on them.

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At Port l'Évêque once more, there had been the days of fishing out in the bay with old Martin Levasseur, and the long tramps on the barrens (one afternoon La Rose had been coaxed into accompanying him, for old time's sake, on a blueberry expedition; and he had made her tell him again about the horse without head and the *feu follet*; but La Rose did not find scurrying about *dans les bois* so easy for her as once); and last of all, there were the long-awaited espousals of Céleste La Vache and Johnny McPhee, which had taken place on the very morning of his departure.

"Never of my life would I leave the captain," Céleste had declared, between gusts of weeping, "if La Rose had not consented to go to him in my place. She knows all his little tastes as well as me; oh, he will be well cared for, je vous assure."

Her prophecies seemed to be fulfilling themselves, to judge by the captain's letters.

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"Since your departure," he wrote in mid-October, "I should have had plenty of chances to mope and be melancholy were it not for the good offices of La Rose. She is excellent company. It surprises me more and more to see how much wisdom one may have acquired without even knowing how to read one's own name. With an education I dare say La Rose would have been a remarkable woman, for despite her superstitiousness, which has always disturbed me, she is by nature liberal and open-minded. To lend variety to our days, we have occasional visits from friends. Eugénie Beauséjour was in again yesterday, and, as usual, we talked much of you. Eugénie is not much of a thinker. But for that matter, how could she be, with that father of hers, and a shilly-shally convent schooling? But now, grandson, I must draw these lines to a close, for La Rose insists that I will fatigue my eyes. We are all proud

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of the success you are achieving with your studies.

“Your affectionate grandfather,
“TRAJANE FOUGÈRE.”

Michel was struck by one detail that constantly recurred in the home letters: the mention of these visits from Eugénie. He did not remember ever having seen her in the house since they were children. La Rose's presence brought her there, no doubt; and he was glad, on his grandfather's account, that she had fallen so easily and naturally into the habit. “And, as usual, we talked much of you.” How like him that was, thought Michel, with a smile of amused indulgence,—always returning to the same inevitable topic! He rather pitied poor Eugénie for having to listen; but knowing her devotion to La Rose, was confident that she was taking everything in good part.

As for himself, he had not seen Eugénie

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more than three or four times all summer. He had been unable to make her out any better than the first day: she seemed somehow to have been changed over into another person; and with this second Eugénie he felt that he had but little in common. She puzzled him, worried and piqued him, — even worse than that; and having come to the conclusion that there was nothing to gain by holding to the shadow of an intimacy which no longer existed, he had finally stopped his visits altogether. She had not been at the wharf this fall to see him off; and he would not have thought much about her since his return, had it not been for this repeated item in his grandfather's weekly letters.

There came a time in December when a fortnight passed without any word from home. It was the first occasion of the sort since he had been at Prince George's, and Michel grew more and more disturbed in his mind as the

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days went by. He remembered what La Rose had told him. He could not sleep at night for anxiety.

Finally a letter came in an unfamiliar handwriting, — delicate, precise, painstakingly regular. He tore it open with a start of dread, which turned into surprise with the first words : —

“My dear Grandson,” it began. “They tell me I had another slight shock last week ; but however that may be, I am feeling wonderfully comfortable now, and have little doubt that I could write you myself, if they would let me. Within a week I shall certainly be able to write. Do not worry in the least. We talk of you every day, and have much enjoyed your interesting letters. We glory in your success.

“Your affectionate grandfather,

“TRAJANE FOUGÈRE.”

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What a singular shock that familiar name brought to him, written here in a small, slanting, finely-traced script; and underneath, two tiny, conscientious initials "E. B." That was all. Eugénie would not add a word of her own!

Michel re-read the letter several times; then laid it away with an odd tenderness, among his handkerchiefs.

It was the same the week after. The captain asserted that he was entirely comfortable, but he must wait, they told him, a little longer, before writing himself. And then, three days later, a telegram came:—

"La Rose thinks you might come home.

"E. BEAUSÉJOUR."

Michel secured permission to leave Prince George's the same day by the noon "express"; and although he had received no authority for so doing, he packed up all his little be-

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longings, making ready for what he felt sure was a final departure. He said good-by to the tall, forbidding barracks of the college without any pang of regret; did not even look behind him as the ramshackle 'bus that carried him to the railway drove out of the high wooden gates of the Parade and turned into the main street of the town.

A fortunate connection enabled him to reach the eastern Nova Scotia terminal that same afternoon; and just below, at the dock, the little packet-boat was waiting for the mail. There was no ice yet in the harbor of Port l'Évêque; hence the landing was made at the customary spot. It was already evening. Nobody was at the wharf except the agent and the mail-boy.

"Do you know how my grandfather is?" Michel inquired anxiously of the agent, Benny Smith by name, an Englishman.

"Some says a little better," was the answer;

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"but nobody knows how much longer he can hold out. He 'll be pleased enough to see you. We was thinkin' 't was about time you come home."

Michel left his trunk and portmanteau in the store, and set out on a quick running walk through the street. He did not meet a soul. Shades were drawn in windows, gleaming dull yellow in the darkness; and from behind some of them he caught the sound of voices. At Madame Paon's some one was singing. He ran up the hill with suddenly increasing anxiety.

There was a light in the living-room, and another in the kitchen. Michel opened the gate stealthily, his heart pounding like a hammer, and, avoiding the gravel path, tiptoed round to the side window, where the shade was up, and peered in. The room was empty. He stole behind the house, saw a light in the captain's bedroom, and drew close.

Captain Trajane lay in the bed, propped up

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with pillows, and he was taking some broth out of a spoon which La Rose held to his lips.

Michel wiped the perspiration from his face, straightened his cap, and rapped at the kitchen door.

La Rose opened it.

“Ah! Mon Jésus!” she cried. “C’est toi, Michel!”

The blank amazement on her face was adorable. Then she embraced him tenderly. “The blessed Mother be praised for sending you so quick. I told that Eugénie she might write you; but I never dreamed it could be the very night! Ah, mon Dieu, mon Dieu, the way things happen nowadays!”

XXIV

EUGÉNIE ran in early the next morning, while Michel was sitting in his grandfather's room.

He heard her voice in the kitchen. "It was such lovely weather," she said; "and I had just been to early mass; so I thought I would make a little promenade, and run in here for a bite and a good-day!"

Her voice dropped a little, so that he did not hear the question that followed; and then La Rose laughed her reply:—

"No, there was not any letter from him last night; but we are not worrying. And for the Captain Trajane—well, you must run in at once and speak to him. Ça marche à merveille—he is doing famously."

He heard the girl's light step in the adjoining room.

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"I am coming in, mon ami," she cried, in a playfully gruff voice. "It is the doctor who makes his daily visit."

She halted abruptly in the doorway, and her face went flame-color.

"Ah! Michel!" she stammered. "You — They did not tell me!"

The boy flushed in responsive embarrassment. He held out his hand, and Eugénie took it mechanically.

"It was a good surprise for me they had planned," put in the old man, cheerfully, from the bed. "La Rose would not breathe of it until the boy had arrived. You knew what would do me good — hé? See, already I can almost sit up without help, though this arm seems to refuse to move yet of itself."

"You must not make too much exertion," cautioned the girl, who had regained her self-control, though the color stayed in her face. "You are to take good care of him,

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Michel. Now I resign the case into your hands."

She turned to him with professional unction. "You are not to allow him to become melancholy, and you must keep him quiet. The first will be easy, now that you are home. The second is of a difficulty. He is a bad child, that patient: he must always be disobeying orders."

She shook her finger reproachfully at the invalid.

Trajane smiled contentedly at her. "Our Michel says he will stay with us a long time," he said, half closing his eyes, — "as long as we wish him. He has brought his trunk."

As she turned to go, he detained her: "But Eugénie, you will come in soon again?"

She drew in her lip slightly. "Perhaps, mon ami," she said. "But, of course, you will not be needing me so much now. You will be well looked out for."

She entered the kitchen quickly, where she

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stopped for a cup of tea and a little chat with La Rose.

"I don't know what we should have done without that girl," murmured the captain, after a moment of awkward silence on Michel's part. "Cheerful and light-hearted as a bird!"

Michel recalled that he had said nothing to her of her services. He rose abruptly and went into the kitchen.

"I have not thanked you, Eugénie," he said, rather constrainedly, "for your kindness in sending me those letters."

She did not look at him directly; but kept her eyes in her cup. "Oh, that was nothing," she replied unconcernedly, as she appeared to be studying her fortune in the tea leaves. "It seemed a pity that Captain Trajane could get no word to you, so I put myself at his disposal."

Michel had the usual feeling that the girl had discredited his good intentions. He did not say anything more, beyond a conventional in-

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quiry after Madame Beauséjour; and in another minute or two Eugénie took her departure.

La Rose turned an inquisitive glance upon Michel, who stood leaning against the doorpost in a study; then she shrugged her shoulders.

"She is of a devotion, that girl," she remarked in a low voice, as if to herself. "She makes me think sometimes of that sweet angel of a Mathilde who is dead now all these years. There is much likeness between them. Eugénie is a white lily."

Michel nodded in qualified agreement. "But I wish I could make her out," he remarked with slight pique. "She has a funny way of saying things."

La Rose gave a shrug, and deliberately changed the subject. "The captain is much better this morning," she said in subdued tones. "I think he is going to get his strength back again. And so it has come into my head that, perhaps, you will be wishing to find some

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occupation for yourself. Madame Barnabé was passing yesterday from Pig Cove. She says the schoolmaster has just left, to go to the big school in St. Esprit. And at that very instant there is the idea in my head. 'Perhaps, after the holidays, that Michel of ours will take that school on the Cape.' And I thought, 'Oh, what a magnificent teacher he would make!' and that is why I am speaking to you about it."

The idea took Michel by surprise, but did not at all repel him; and as Captain Trajane visibly gained in strength from day to day, the need for the boy to stay closely at home disappeared. Michel had been right, however, in considering his days at Prince George's definitely over. The doctor told him privately that the old man might hold out as long as a year — his vitality was remarkable; on the other hand, the end might come any day.

"You had better not be far from home,"

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advised the doctor ; and it was clearly the captain's unspoken wish as well. His comparative helplessness, his dependence upon others, against which he no longer chafed, but accepted with simple, inexpressive docility, made of him a person so different from the proud, self-sufficient, assertive captain of other days that Michel found himself, without surprise or embarrassment, assuming a rôle of guardian and counselor.

When, a week later, the boy told him that he had been appointed to the school at Pig Cove, the old man's eyes shone with childlike pleasure.

"Ah, Michel, that is the best of news. You will be close by — almost as if at home. We shall see you often ; you will come in to us over each Sunday. That will be a comfort. And all the time you will be performing a real service to Humanity, which is our highest privilege. The other things can come later

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—later—sometime. But, for the present, you will be with us at home.”

It was, on the whole, a singularly happy winter for Michel. The school was a small one, and the work was not difficult. He liked the children, and managed somehow to keep them interested. Through the week he lived in the home of a fisherman, Pierre Babinot, where he ate the coarse fare with a relish, and listened delightedly to the tales of the neighborhood; and on Saturday he would walk in to Port l'Évêque, a distance of four or five miles, by the narrow road that twisted its threadlike way across the gleaming, snow-covered, wind-swept barrens.

At home he rarely saw Eugénie; but it appeared that she often dropped in during the week, to read for a while to Captain Trajane or to chat with La Rose over a cup of tea.

“You do not need me when Michel is at home,” she had replied to a query of the

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captain's. "Is it not better to have one at a time?"

"Ah," said old Trajane, "but the boy would be so glad to see you himself. He is so fond of you."

An odd flush came to her cheeks. "We have always been such good friends," she agreed,—"ever since we were little children. But it does not seem very convenient for me to be from home on a Saturday,—there is so much to be done; and father makes objections to my going on long promenades Sunday afternoon."

On two occasions when he went with La Rose to church, Michel had a glimpse of her in the choir-loft behind; and once they encountered her at the church door; but she only nodded to them with a quick, bright smile, and turned up the gallery stairs.

"What a humor of a young girl!" muttered La Rose, with a slight toss of her head.

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“What did you say, La Rose?” asked the boy, thinking she had addressed him.

“I said, how curiously the good God has created these young girls: — but for that matter,” she concluded cryptically, “there are still more curious things in the world than that one.”

XXV

ONE warm Saturday afternoon in spring Michel made a call upon the McPhees of Scaramouche. He found Johnny seated in the very spot where he first had made his acquaintance, — sprawled at ease on the threshold of the tiny front door; yet not precisely as of old, for now the seat was made more comfortable by a plump red cushion; and his feet, instead of resting on a flat stone, were stretched forth upon a smart white step of wood. At the sight of Michel he quickly removed his cob-pipe from his lips, and greeted him with suitable magnificence: —

“My dear friend,” he cried, with skinny hands outstretched, “my very dear old friend! How am I going to tell you the extreme pleasure we have in welcoming you to our little nest! That dear little Céleste will have

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some tears of delight. This afternoon she is doing a bit of work in the vegetable garden — she is always the same miracle of industry. But if you will consent to wait here an instant, I shall go to inform her that our dear old friend has come from Pig Cove to Scaramouche."

During his absence Michel took a delighted account of the changes that had been brought to pass in a year. A minute flower-garden, full of promising seedlings, and protected by a tall fence of chicken-wire, had been established exactly in the middle of the small yard, and, faithful in spirit to its famous prototype, a shining border of large clam-shells (Scaramouche had a name for its clams) had been religiously laid down on its circumference.

And the immaculate neatness of everything! Michel noticed the white curtains at the tiny windows, caught back with bright ribbons. The little picket fence was resplendent in

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fresh whitewash. The sailor and the windmill had multiplied: there were two of each sort now, all gayly performing their duty with a pleasant, animated, purring sound and an occasional shrill squeak.

But what struck the boy's attention, above all, was the sight of a small bird suddenly emerging from the door of one of the bird-houses. It paused speculatively for an instant; then shot into the air with a flash of blue.

"Ah, my dear old camarade!" cried Johnny, who had just returned; "is not that a marvel for you? After all these years the birds have come. And it is that amiable Céleste of mine who has caused it."

Michel was prompt with the expected interrogation.

"I would have lived to be a hundred," said Johnny, "and never have got the idea. Do you see that little platform in front of each house? Céleste conceived that. 'If I was a bird, me,'

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she said, 'I would never live in a house without a step in front. A house is not decent without a step.' So when I built our new step here" (he glanced down proudly), "nothing would do but I must improve the bird-houses in the same manner. And then — right in a moment — the birds come. There — you see they appreciate it! They alight there always before entering. Is not that an idea?"

A heavy, eager step behind him, then a quick scream of joy, and Michel was embraced by the stocky arms of Madame McPhee.

"Eh, mon cher petit amour!" she gasped. "How we are glad to see you — n'est-ce pas, mon Johnny? We were thinking you had forgotten us."

And then, deprecatingly: "Oh, but you will excuse everything for being so filthy. This week I have spent every day in the garden. I adore a garden of vegetables — beets and carrots and onions and all those other things for

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the soup! Mais, sacré nom d'chien, if it is a horror how the dirt makes itself appear everywhere! Nevertheless, you will not refuse to enter in the house and have a cup of tea — and Johnny, mon cherubin, you will perhaps play some little thing for him, n'est-ce pas?"

"It must be 'Chasse les Moutons,'" said Michel. "Céleste, do you remember?"

Céleste giggled rhapsodically. "If I remember!" she cried. "Who would have thought that it would one day have come to this! Me, never of my life had I one idea of saying a word to that Johnny. It was you, mon petit, who compelled me to stop; and then Johnny, he went and fell in love with me — n'est-ce pas, Johnny?"

Her husband acquiesced with a grimace. "Oui, mon ange," he said. "Something seemed to tell me that there was my wife — holding to the picket fence — who awaited me."

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Céleste would not have it then but they must enter the diminutive living-room, and while Johnny left them a moment to hunt for his mouth-organ, she confided something in a joyful, mysterious whisper, into the boy's ear.

“—And me here already forty years old!” she added. “Think of that, mon Michel. Is it not a wonderful thing? It is the good God who has brought it about.”

Michel gave a quick smile. “It will be another musician, perhaps,” he said, looking into her small eyes, from which she was blinking away the tears.

“That is just what I pray for,” she agreed. “If some day we could only hear the two of them playing at once! And I am sure they would do a good business, for that matter. A fiddle and a mouth-organ go together with a marvel! Or, perhaps, two fiddles.”

It was an afternoon to remember. Johnny

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was in one of his inimitable moods ; Céleste hovered about — so to speak — solicitously, admiringly, proud beyond words of her “little nutshell” of a house ; with tremulous joy exhibiting the hooked rugs she had lately made, and the ingenious cradle Johnny was constructing, which could be turned easily into a wheelbarrow when it would be no longer required by the little one.

“I have not the notion quite clear yet,” he had admitted. “But there is plenty of time to think over it.”

“The ideas that man has !” ejaculated Céleste, devotedly.

Before Michel left, they questioned him about his plans. The vacation, they learned, would begin in about six more weeks.

“I suppose,” said Johnny, very sagaciously, “you will be trying to make another trip down to St. Pierre, Miquelon, *hein* ?”

The boy's eyes shone. “If I could !” he

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cried; "but I do not know whether my grandfather will be well enough."

Johnny McPhee made a shrewd grimace. "There's a man for you, mon alouette!" he exclaimed, turning to Céleste. "He knows the place where the fog makes the red cheeks!"

"Oh, for shame, mon homme!" railed Céleste. "Michel does not care about any of those girls down there. He has one of his own right in Port l'Évêque."

She turned to him for confirmation. "Is that not so, mon Michel? La Rose told me everything."

Michel was stricken dumb, as if with a paralysis.

"There!" she triumphed gleefully. "Just look at him! Ah, well, my little cabbage, that Eugénie, she is a good girl, and it is certain, La Rose says, she is heels over head in love with you."

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Michel, in dismay, got out a blundering denial, which was greeted with screams of laughter by the knowing Madame McPhee. — That was how the good God had made these young men, she declared, — always to deny that they were touched, even when they were fairly bursting with it.

“That is just how it was with my Johnny,” she said. — “And see him now !”

XXVI

AND Michel, alone, ten minutes later, climbing the Scaramouche hill on his way home, did not know what to think. Never in his life had he been so taken by surprise. His first impulse had been one of almost frantic denial; but even as the words came from his lips, he had realized that all conviction had been snatched out of them; they sounded empty, futile, idiotic — a merely conventional pretense of ignorance and astonishment.

For in one startling flash of vision he had seen all the perplexities of the past months resolving themselves and melting into air. It was true. . . . It was true! . . . What dumb-founded him now was that he could have been so dull, so slow of perception. A sudden wave of shame swept over him, bringing the heat to his skin. There was an odd blur; the

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ground undulated beneath his light feet, like a landscape seen across a stream of heated air. Michel had been startled to the centre of his being. He could not get back his self-possession. How brutal he had been! How he must have hurt her, — over and over again! The wonder, the sweetness of the gift she had offered, humbled him, dismayed him. His conduct appeared to him no less cruel — perhaps even more so — than if he had purposely insulted her, on every opportunity that had come to him.

And the thought sprang up that he would never be able to speak to her after this — or look at her — now that he knew. He tried to fight it down; he argued with himself that it made no real difference whether he knew or not; the situation remained unaltered; there was nothing to prevent his continuing to act just as he had always acted in the past — only that hereafter he would be

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more gentle and considerate. But at the same moment something deep within him cried out in ultimate protest. Everything had changed, — he felt it distinctly enough, whatever logic might tell him, — everything that really mattered. An instinct of flight came upon him—to find some place of hiding, where he would be secure from this uninvited, mysterious force that would claim him. He told himself that it was for her sake as much as for his own that he must avoid any further meeting with her.

The next morning he stayed at home with his grandfather (who seemed brighter and more talkative than was usual of late), reading aloud from Plutarch's Life of Cato the Elder, recalling happily, under the ready prompting of the old man, the days when he had laboriously spelled out these very words, sitting there, a little boy of ten, on the garden bench; and early in the afternoon he left

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for the Cape. He could not resist any longer the instinct of escape that was upon him; he felt under an odd restraint, inexplicably restless; and he longed wildly to be out there again, in that open, skyey, sea-encircled country, where once more he could get back his sense of liberty.

That night he tramped abroad for miles under a clear, moonless sky, now clambering daringly along the precipitous shore, now following for a distance the threadlike road as it twisted and turned among the low hills—passing once close under the tall calvaire of La Belle Mélanie;—finally breasted an abrupt headland; threw himself down on the sparse grass that capped it, and lay there for a long time, curled up like a hound, sheer over the silent bay, whose changeful depths glimmered with faint stars.

But despite all he could do, the same fantastic excitement persisted. It was in vain that

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he tried, during the week, to bury himself in his school work. He began to wonder how he could possibly bring himself to go home on Saturday. He cast about helplessly for some excuse which would enable him to stay away without being a cause of worry. The nights were worse than the days; sleep came to him only in uneasy, restless snatches. One night, when a storm was brewing in the southeast, he dreamed that he had just landed from the Olympe down in St. Pierre, Miquelon; and when one of those girls with the red cheeks had smiled at him in the way he knew, he had nodded yes and started into a house with her, and then, all of a sudden, he had turned upon her, shaking his fist in her face, and crying out, "Leave me alone. I have a girl of my own in Port l'Évêque, and I am going to remember her and try and keep good";—and at that moment he had awakened, trembling from head to foot, and had heard the rain

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beginning to rustle on the eaves just over his head; and he had felt indignant at himself —almost ashamed—to think that he had said that. What was Eugénie to him! Why must she follow him like that, even in his dreams? . . . And he began wondering if they would be able to spare him from home for a fortnight that coming summer. Captain Tommy had promised to make a place for him on the Olympe; and he would like to see Miquelon again, with all the fishing craft that thronged its little harbor, and the Breton sailors on the wharves, and the girls with the red cheeks, that smiled at you and waited. . . .

Late the next afternoon, long after the children had gone home, he still sat there in the schoolroom at his bare desk. Outside, the rain came in shrill gusts; and then everything would be quiet, except for the deep, sullen, monotonous roar of the sea on the outer shore of the Cape.

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Fatigued and bewildered by his emotions, which had been in riot now for five days, Michel allowed his head to drop forward upon his arms, which were stretched out rigidly on the desk top, and an indefinite time passed — perhaps a half hour — without his taking any note of external things. At last the slow creak of wheels on the road outside came to his ears; but he did not raise his head, supposing that it was some fisherman returning from Port l'Évêque — though the Cap Auguet fishermen usually drove at top speed. An instant later, however, the sound came to a stop just outside; and there was a light, quick step on the path under the window.

Michel straightened himself with a start, and rubbed his eyes in a momentary bewilderment. There was a hasty tap on the door. He was not sure whether he answered it or not; but as he stumbled to his feet it sprang open,

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and there was Eugénie standing before him, with a white, drawn face.

"Oh, Michell!" she cried anxiously. "I hoped so you would be here!"

Her teeth were chattering with cold and excitement. He noticed that she had no gloves on her blue, rain-wet hands. Yet for the moment it all seemed unreal to him; he was only a detached observer.

"Is he dead, Eugénie?" he asked. The words seemed to have come from another than himself; his own lips had not moved, surely; he had the feeling of their being paralyzed.

"I don't know," he heard her saying, in a frightened tone. "Not when I left, Michel. He said, 'Tell Michel I have something to say to him.' I ran down to Captain Tommy's, and Henriette and I harnessed the horse, and I came as quick as I could; but the horse stumbled back there about two miles, and he must

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have hurt his leg. He began limping frightfully, and I had to let him walk after that."

Michel had recovered himself. He was beginning to think quickly now.

"All the horses here are let out over the barrens," he said. "We never could catch one of them at this time of the day."

There was a second's silence, while Eugénie stood staring at him helplessly, one hand caught to her breast.

"There's only one way," he went on, with a quiet decision she had never seen in him before, — "and that's the boat. I can make old Pierre give it to me, and we could get in to Port l'Évêque in less than an hour."

Involuntarily the girl's eyes cast a shuddering glance out of the window. Under a sky of flying clouds she saw the bay flecked with shining whitecaps to the limit of vision.

The tone in which she next spoke betrayed a hint of the terror which she had meant to

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hide from him. "Michel, you must promise me never to tell my mother. She has never consented to my going in a sailboat."

Not knowing what he was doing, — answering some quick, imperious cry of his instincts, — Michel caught her two hands forcefully in his and pressed them against his lips. The next instant he had dropped them again in confusion, without looking at her. He snatched up his cap and flung his coat over his shoulders.

"Come," he said. "We can leave the horse at old Pierre's, and I will have them give you a little swallow of brandy; and there is a sou'-wester in the house you can put on, which will protect you a little. You will not mind the trip so much; it will be a little rough, that is all. There's not a trick of Pierre Babinot's boat I don't know."

He climbed after her into the high, old-fashioned buck-wagon, and, without any more

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speech to her, urged the limping horse down the hill toward Pig Cove, which lay there below them, straggled along the edge of its tiny, sluice-like harbor.

XXVII

OLD Pierre opened the door to them in undisguised astonishment, and they entered the low, smoky kitchen.

Michel explained himself briefly: "Mademoiselle brings word that the Captain Trajane is dying. The horse has gone lame, so I am going to take your boat, if you will let me."

He turned to Pierre's wife—a small, shriveled woman in a red petticoat, whose lips were drawn in over toothless gums. "Mademoiselle is very cold," he said. "Will you be so good as to bring her a little cognac or some hot drink?"

He set a chair close to the stove and made Eugénie sit there.

"It is very bad getting to Port l'Évêque in weather like this," said Pierre Babinot, with

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a shake of his grizzled head, — “bad squalls coming — là-bas — and in an hour it will be right dark.”

Michel cut him off peremptorily. “It’s the only way; you can see for yourself. And I’ve had the boat out in worse than this.”

Pierre shrugged his shoulders resignedly. “You are a good sailor, God knows,” he admitted, — “as if you had been born for the boat. Take it; you are welcome. And my old woman and me, we shall do the best we can for mam’selle. — He can trust her to us, *hein*, Brigitte?”

The girl spoke. “But I am going with him.”

Brigitte raised her knotty hands. “*Sacré nom de Dieu!*” she cried, aghast. “But — my sweetheart, that is not possible. Never in the weather it makes now! Oh, m’sieu!” — she turned beseechingly to Michel, — “surely

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you would not think to permit that! — a lovely young girl like her!"

The boy's lips were white. "Not unless she wishes," he answered, in a voice which he forced to be calm. "It is for her to say. It might be better for her to remain. I do not suppose there will be need of her at home."

He could not look at the girl, but went to the window and peered out, every muscle rigid with the strain of leashed excitement.

"Oh, mam'selle," cried the old woman, whose eyes had tears in them now, "listen to him! You do not know the dangers. I lost both my two sons in a time like this." . . .

She put a shaking hand on Eugénie's arm.

The girl's face was bloodless; but she spoke with a direct, unperplexed simplicity — serenity, almost — which was unanswerable.

"Why should I not go?" she said. "I am not afraid. I can trust him."

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Michel's heart gave a wild, exultant leap that came near to anguish.

"Get her something to wear, madame," he directed. "Pierre, you will help me get the boat ready, n'est-ce pas?"

A few minutes later the double-reefed brown sail was hoisted. Pierre rowed the girl out to the boat; and the two men helped her clamber aboard. Michel cast off, and they were under way — with a lurch and tug as the gust caught in the sail.

"I can make the Point without tacking, hé, Pierre?" he shouted back.

"Mais oui, — if the squall does not hit you first. — It's making like hell — là-bas."

Eugénie had taken her place just above Michel in the stern, her feet braced, her hands clutching the rail, motionless, neither speaking nor thinking. In a kind of trance she felt the boat heave and sink under her; saw the dark low shores fleeing, — fleeing, —

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back into the distance under a wild sky, where the clouds scudded.

She saw the boy's face, white as death in the strange light, set like a flint, his eyes fixed ahead, peering across the two miles of reeling sea toward a low pinnacle of rock, narrowly separated from the shore, that raised its crest above dancing flecks of white. The boat jabbed her nose down into the waves, and the spume shot over them in blinding, icy volleys. Michel was holding her for every last inch into the wind, for if he could not make the Point, there was nothing for it but to tack — and lose time. Or else — he found himself thinking with cold-blooded calculation of the narrow tidal passage inside the Point: with this wind, and the tide where it was, it ought to be possible to run through it, if he fell short of the Point itself. But so far the boat was a little more than holding her own.

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Eugénie knew nothing of the length of time they had been fighting their way so; it seemed *always* to her; — when she heard Michel's voice, low, but cutting the gale like a knife.

"There she comes," he muttered.

She saw the sea turning opal-green under the white horizon, and a weird, unearthly pallor came flying toward them across the face of the bay — giving separate visibility, it seemed, to each individual wave at its sudden moment of existence: an infinite multitude of them, always glimmering into sight from beyond the edge of the world.

"Look out!" he cried; and the mainsail dropped with a scream of rope directly in front of her.

"Get down quick!"

She crouched in the bottom of the boat.

She saw the waves suddenly wheeling above her head, blotting out the sky. The boat stag-

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gered, seemed about to drop into the abyss; then shot up — hung there on the dizzy neck of the waves; righted itself. . . .

The next she knew she was bailing out the water, conscious of no exertion, vaguely wondering how she came to be doing that.

“I’m going to try the passage,” said Michel, with set teeth. “I dare n’t tack her here.”

They were close now to the low, precipitous shore, with its terrible border of white. She saw a table-like ledge looming larger and larger ahead of them, while the boat battled onward under straining jib.

Then the boy set the tiller over, and the same instant, with the speed of a projectile, they shot off before the wind, straight into the neck of the narrow gut, seething over its scarcely submerged rocks.

Michel held his breath in a paralysis of dread. There was a just perceptible grating underneath — a shudder through the boat —

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and they leaped onward, into the protected waters of the Port l'Évêque harbor.

Through the swift-gathering darkness and across the veil of rain which the squall had let down in its flying track, they could see the pale, wavering lights along the village street.

The girl took her old place again beside him. Her eyes were straining toward the inner harbor, which was shrouded in darkness. And as Michel watched her — free, at last, to watch — he was conscious of a wild emotion that brought the knot into his throat : pride, desire, heart-breaking tenderness. . . .

Silently the boat fled toward the inner shore of the harbor ; the motion was like that of the thistledown that surrenders itself to the swift impulses of heaven ; and a few minutes later he had made fast to Leblanc's wharf and had helped her ashore.

For one inarticulate second he gazed full into her face, and she returned his gaze, with

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parted white lips. Then he flung his arms passionately about her and caught her to his breast; and with a proud, lovely look of consent she surrendered her lips to his.

“Eugénie!” — the word broke from him like a sob. “Always, and always, — and always!”

The girl did not make any answer, but gently released herself; and together they sped silently from the wharf and up the hill toward the captain's.

La Rose opened the door.

“He is dead. — Half an hour ago.”

XXVIII

THE old captain's departure, vaguely expected for so long a time, had come suddenly enough in the end. After those words which he had spoken to Eugénie, he had not opened his mouth but a single time, and then only to ask quietly if the boy had come; and when La Rose had answered: "Pas encore — not yet, but Eugénie is gone for him," he had closed his eyes contentedly and lain for a long while, it seemed, in a kind of lethargy, not suffering, not desirous of anything — except the coming of the boy; which would be all in good time.

"It was like a child, his lying there," was La Rose's account of it, — "so calm, and smiling a little, with his two eyes not quite closed. And once I summoned the courage to ask him if perhaps he would not let send for the priest,

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and he shook his head — oh, very gently, without saying anything, and then lay still again.

“And finally the wind had come up and was rattling the window a little, and the rain was on the roof, and it was getting a little dark; and the thought comes to me, ‘La Rose, you must go and light a candle’ — and I was just getting up from my knees, when all of a sudden I saw his hands move — so; just like that; such a little movement — and a trembling runs down his body (but if I knew the meaning of that!) and he opens his mouth as if to speak; but no, it is only a sigh, — and that is the end.

“But I am sure,” she asserted, “if ever a good man has lived in this world, it was that Captain Trajane, especially in his last years, after all that trouble had come to him because he would never let poor Amédée have his way. And what the good God does with

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such men, who can say? but I am sure He makes a place for them somewhere, because He has a kind heart, and He knows that if things had been different, this way or that way, they would have been good Catholics like the rest." . . .

Captain Trajane had gone, and his last message had been unuttered. La Rose, however, was confident that she knew it.

"It is certain, Michel," she said to the boy a few days later,—"it is certain that he had a little divined your dislike for that horror of a college down there; and that is why he never would listen to anything but only of the praise and the success, and nobody must speak of anything else. And now that he would be here no more to have a part in it, do you think he would be desiring you to take it up again? No, Michel; he would say, 'It is for you, now, my grandson, to decide these things. You have done all this to

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please a poor old man who loved you better than his eyes and nose, and now he thanks you, and says good-by, and goes away, and you will do just what you desire.' — Yes, that is what he was going to say, you may believe me, mon Michel."

Michel finished out his spring term on the Cape, coming in to Port l'Évêque over every week end, and — now that the evenings were long and bright — frequently by boat after school of an afternoon; but La Rose, who was staying on for the present at the Fougère cottage, complained that she did not see much of him.

"He must always be off somewhere with that Eugénie now."

But in her heart she rejoiced. It had taken Michel a pretty long while to find out. Well, was not that a proof that when he finally put his heart there it would stay? Besides, they were so young still — God knows! — children,

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the two of them. Even now there must be long enough to wait.

Captain Tommy made the offer to take Michel on the Olympe down to Bay Chaleur in the Gulf, where he could ship on one of the Loucin Frères' brigs for Rio : that would be a good trip for him, said Captain Tommy ; he would get his experience, — at the outset as a common sailor like the rest, — and then he would know better what to look for when the time came. Perhaps he would want to enter the Naval School ; or perhaps the merchant service (where everything was steam nowadays) ; or it might be that, when he had seen something of the world (boys are that way ; they must see for themselves), he would be ready to come home and settle down to some other vocation altogether.

As for Michel himself, he was not very deeply concerned, just now, about the future. He knew what he wanted to do *next* ; and

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the chance for doing it had come to him; that was enough.

The Olympe arrived, on her way down to the Gulf, the first week in July; she waited two days, and was scheduled to put out at daylight Monday morning. Michel made his good-byes the night before.

La Rose was to stay at the Beauséjourns' over night. The next day she would go to Céleste McPhee's for a few weeks, or longer, as she seemed to be needed. Sitting with Madame Beauséjour on the steps about sunset time, she watched those two children of hers — as she called them — making their last walk together up the hill by the church — up across the high street — and through the gate of the old cemetery where the daisies were in full flood. . . .

“What is the matter, La Rose,” asked Madame Beauséjour, who was not very sentimental.

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“I am ‘thinking,” said the little woman, through a quick, gentle rush of tears, “I am thinking — they are so young, those two! Oh, how much — they are going to suffer!”

XXIX

THE daisies buried the feet of the lovers, clung about them with soft, vain entreaty, as they made their way lingeringly up the path — almost obliterated now — that led through the faltering company of the old grave-crosses toward the hill ridge. Every passing year had seen more riotously triumphant here the assault of life upon death, — of life constantly renewing its buoyant asseveration, its flux and thrust and beauty. Under a flood of spring it hides the wrack of mortality, and pushes upward.

Love in the springtime has no past. It is immortal. It does not ask out of what it has come; it only knows that it is, and is to be. It accepts itself as a part of the whole miracle.

Before Michel, opened a future of untrav-

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eled wonder. He had no dread because of any incertitude or mystery that might lurk there; his veins throbbed with the tyranny of abundant life; he exulted in the giving and in the accepting of the sweetest of life's gifts; and the very consciousness he had of a new possession that was not of himself, yet that was by so much the more himself, had roused in him a thirst more imperative than ever for new and daring experience. Never so deeply as now had every fibre of his being thrilled to the enchantment of doors widely opening — of fleeing horizons — of voices that cried *Adieu, home-land, — Azur!*

“Think of it, Eugénie,” he exclaimed finally, drawing a long breath of exhilaration, “how much — how much there is to live for! We are only just beginning.”

The girl made no response; and a moment later, glancing at her, he saw a quiver of her upper lip. He halted. She lifted her eyes

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searchingly to his own and peered deeply into them with a look of tragic interrogation and longing. Seconds passed.

At last she shivered slightly, and shook her head. Her voice was a whisper.

“Ah, Michel, if only you did not want quite so much to—to go away. It makes me a little afraid.”

He caught her hand and held it with gentle fierceness in his, not speaking, till they reached a little slope just over the crest of the hill, in face of the quiet, sunset-dreaming barrens. He sat down abruptly on a broad hummock of moss, and drew her unresistingly beside him. Then his arms were strongly about her, and his hot lips covering her face with kisses.

At last, with a little yearning sob, he held her from him at half arm's length, framing her white, flower-like face with his two brown hands, and broke out, with tender brutality:—

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"Eugénie, — sweetheart, — you've got to trust me!"

She caught his wrists with her hands, pushed them off, and the next instant she was on his knees, one arm clinging about his neck, and her head against his shoulder.

"Michel, I do, — oh, I do, Michel. I trust you. It is n't that, — only sometimes, when you seem so frightfully eager to go away, I can't help feeling — oh, I don't know how to say it — as if I needed to keep you all for myself. I don't want to share you. I don't want you to like anything else so well as me. I don't want you to go — off there."

She turned her face away from him. His hand played fondly with her soft hair, shadow-like in the gathering dusk.

"Chérie, p'tite chérie," he murmured, several times over; and then, after a silence: —

"Listen! You ought to be glad to have me go. I want to show you I can deserve

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being loved like that. I want to do something you can be proud of. Do you wish I did n't want to go away?"

She looked up at him with tear-wet eyes, and gently shook her head.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Nothing," she answered faintly. "I'm only silly. — Are you sure you won't forget to think about me every day?"

Michel nodded. "No, never," he whispered.

"Not even when you're down there, clear on the other side of the world?"

He kissed her.

"Say it, dearest," she persisted, — "just to make me happy. Please say you'll think about me — every day."

"Every day," said the man gravely, — "as long as I live and wherever I am, I promise you. — Eugénie, I love you so much, it seems as if all my life were only just

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these minutes when you are with me like this."

The girl quivered happily in his arms, without speaking. There was a strange, clear certitude in his voice, when he went on softly, that thrilled in the twilight hush,—

"I'm going, chérie, because I've got to go," he said. "I can't help that, Eugénie; I can't even want to help it. It tugs at me here all the time. I don't know what it means. My father was like that, and he couldn't tell why, either."

"Did your mother want him to go away?" asked the girl. Her face was drawn, showing blue veins through its pallor.

His arms tightened a little. "No, but she made herself want him to go, because she knew he needed to go."

There was a silence. A low pale fog crept in sight over the edge of the barrens, and sent down a thin, tremulous fringe into a

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nearer hollow. The first breath of the evening chill came to them.

"I want you to go," whispered the girl, simply.

She surrendered her lips to him again, and again there was a silence over the world.

"La Rose says," she murmured finally, "that your mother was the loveliest woman that ever lived. She always calls her a white lily."

"La Rose told me you made her think of my mother," whispered Michel.

Eugénie smiled pensively. "La Rose is too kind-hearted," she said. "There is not much lily in me. I am selfish and jealous and childish. I want my own way. I am afraid of a little pain. I do not deserve to be mentioned beside your mother."

She freed herself gently from his arms, and rose to her feet.

"Michel," she said. "It is not too dark yet.

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Please take me over there to where her grave is. Do you remember how we used to stand in front of the cross and spell out the name on it and the dates?"

Michel knew the way perfectly, though it was some years since he had visited the spot.

"You will wet your feet," he cautioned her solicitously. "La Rose and your mother will reproach you."

"I don't care," she returned. "Besides, there's not much dew yet. Even the sunset is n't quite gone."

He led her back over the hill; turned out of the path, across a little tangle of wild-rose not yet in bloom; rounded a small fenced inclosure, so crowded with luxuriant lilacs that there seemed to be no room for another tenant; finally halted before the well-remembered cross of rain-bared wood.

"That is it," he said solemnly.

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The cross leaned more than of old; and even in full daylight it would have been impossible to decipher the inscription now.

“My father had a terrible battle to make,” he said, “and my mother was the only one who believed in him; and if he had lived—Amédée—he would have got the victory, and people would have come to see the kind of man he was.”

They stood gazing silently at Mathilde's quiet grave, and the thoughts of each went out to distant places.

“Sometimes I shall come up here, Michel,” said the girl, “when you are gone. And when I think about Mathilde I don't think I shall feel afraid—or, at least, not so much.”

He put one arm about her, and they turned back, toward the path. The light had all but gone out of the west now; but not far above

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the palely gleaming horizon one clear-burning star hung in startling radiance.

“I think you are going to be with me everywhere,” said the man, almost under his breath,
— “to the end of the world.”

XXX

IT was at that moment of the morning twilight when the day seems to be hesitating in final reluctance just beyond the dreaming horizon, that La Rose and Eugénie made their way together up the hill and westward along the winding grass-grown highway toward the Calvary, which stands at the point of highest elevation, above a little flight of steps — a spot consecrated in the traditions of Port l'Évêque to the first welcomes and last farewells for the seafarers.

A fresh breeze was springing up out of the southwest, and the first low murmurs of the day's reawakening were in the air: the diffident chirp of a bird in the grass, and a stir of small wings; the sound of a horse, back a little distance over the hill, shaking itself with a low whinny of satisfaction. A little flock of sheep,

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seven or eight, that had lain huddled against the fence, suddenly got up on their feet and pattered off nervously ahead of the two women.

“It will be a good day for their starting,” said La Rose, almost inaudibly.

Below them there was a distant creak of blocks, and slowly up the slim mainmast of the *Olympe* a dark sail began to creep—shapeless at first, bagging and swinging, then, little by little, taking on an outline, a tall, lithe grace, that caught in its hollow the white gleam of the dawn. By the time the foresail was up, a ruddiness had come upon it; and then, swiftly, the day broke, turning the harbor and the distant sea into a floor of shifting carmine, streaked and spotted with strange metallic lustres of pewter.

La Rose and Eugénie stood side by side on the topmost step, and the older woman had taken a hand of the other in hers. Down there

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they were weighing the anchor. The chain clanked over the windlass ; and in a few minutes more, almost before the fore staysail had started on its ascent, the Olympe began to move, easily, silently, parallel with the shore. Her sails swelled like taut wings. The sky was flushing clear to the zenith.

Simultaneously the two women began to wave their handkerchiefs.

“He sees us,” whispered La Rose, with a caught breath. “He is there in the bow, making his signal.”

The vessel was gaining headway. Now she passed directly below them, cutting a white furrow in the crimson level; then, with a proud, deliberate movement, she turned half on her heel, the sails swung over, and she was off, with a glad rush, for the mouth of the harbor. All the jibs had been set ; and now the topsails opened, one after the other, like fans. Moment by moment the Olympe was

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retreating into the distance, though still the flicker of white was visible at her stern.

By the time the sun was up she had passed beyond the harbor mouth and out into the bay. The whole world thrilled with glory. A flight of eager swallows darted through the air with a whirl of wings and low, peeping cries.

At last La Rose said, with a sigh, "There is nothing for us to do here any more. He is gone. We must try to get used to it."

She drew the girl reluctantly down the steps and back toward the town. Since they had first set out, an hour before, Eugénie had not spoken. Her face was set — almost expressionless. She had made no sign of hearing any of the old woman's infrequent comments. But now she turned to her abruptly, with a look of inexpressible anguish; her lips moved; but still there were no words.

La Rose gave a quick pressure to the hand she held. "Look," she said, "here is what I

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begged from your father last night. It is the key to the little vestry door. There will be no one in the church but ourselves. Who knows but what the good God or the blessed Mother will have more time to listen to us? Come, we will have a nice little hour there, saying some prayers together for that dear boy of ours."





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